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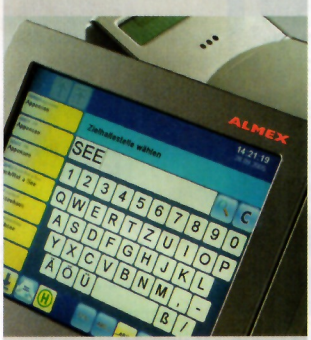

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Selective thinking

The re-regulation debate which has ground on for 20 years often sheds more heat than light on the subject.

The latest exchange of mutual back-slapping between Merseyside PTE chair Cllr Mark Dowd and Mayor of London Ken Livingstone reveals the extent to which it's possible to present a strong case for anything if you're selective enough with the facts.

Cllr Dowd and other re-regulators are forever drawing a false parallel between London and other cities, and suggesting that what works for London could work elsewhere. But the only part of London policy they want to import is service franchising.

The whole point of Ken Livingstone's policy is that it is both carrot and stick. The PTE areas in particular are notable for their complete absence of Congestion Charging - the foundation block of increased ridership on London buses. It cut traffic by almost 40% and last year raised £90 million for bus improvements. Is Cllr Dowd brave enough to do the same for Liverpool?

London bus services got £772 million in central government support for 2003/4, including BSOG. It has a population of 7.1 million. That's £107 per person. The remaining 53 million UK residents share £908 million - £17 a head.

According to Cllr Dowd, bus use outside of London has halved and fares risen 86% in the last 20 years. He neglects to mention that ridership was falling long before deregulation in the 1980s and, in fact, peaked in London the year the NBC was formed in 1969. The state monopoly was chewing its way through public funds but presiding over falling passenger numbers - the problem that the Tories sought to resolve with privatisation.

The outcome was far from perfect, but wandering the corridors of power complaining about corporate greed without coming up with a holistic policy of your own isn't going to get bums on seats. If London proves anything for the rest of the UK, it's that you need a great plan, an iron political will, lots of cash and to earn a public mandate if you are to achieve anything. And it helps if you inherit a franchise system....

Mark Williams

Mark Williams
Editor

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Stagecoach sells London

Australian bankers to take control of capital bus business

In a shock move last Friday, Stagecoach announced it was selling its London bus business to the Macquarie Bank Group, an Australian investment conglomerate. Stagecoach says growth in London will slow in the future and that it wants to free itself to pursue higher growth opportunities outside the capital.

The deal is worth £263.6m, representing a £120m gain in real terms since Stagecoach acquired the business for £25.6m in 1994. Stagecoach says the money will initially be used to pay back borrowings. Separate figures are not published, but Stagecoach London is estimated to account for around £225m in turnover (around 16% of Stagecoach's total turnover), and £24m profit. The sale is expected to be finalised within three months and is conditional on the approval of TfL.

Macquarie says it is buying the company as a long-term investment. The company also owns high-profile British assets like the M6 Toll Road, Bristol Airport, part of Birmingham International Airport, NTL and Wightlink, the ferry service to the Isle of Wight. It is also currently engaged in a bid-battle for London Ports with Goldman Sachs bank.

Brian Souter, Stagecoach Group chief executive, says: "The London bus operations have been a highly successful part of Stagecoach's UK bus division since 1994. After assessing Macquarie's offer and the prospects for the London bus operations, we concluded that the disposal was in the best interests of our shareholders.

"The sale of the London bus business will allow us to focus on our successful UK bus growth strategy outside London, where we have demonstrated our strength in delivering innovation, investment and strong marketing. We will continue to look for further organic growth and bolt-on acquisition opportunities in our UK and North American bus business and opportunities to grow our rail portfolio."

A Stagecoach spokesman says: "We still believe London is a growth market, but it has been assisted by significant investment in transport by the mayor and the implementation of the congestion charge.

"We believe growth in the city will return to more moderate levels in the future and we can best deploy our entrepreneurial flair in less regulated markets." Over the last year, Stagecoach has bought operators in Merseyside, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Tayside and says it has bucked the trend outside London and managed consistent organic passenger growth for a number of years.

The deal has given rise to much speculation on Stagecoach's possible intentions. The spokesman denied rumours that the company is being slimmed down in order to take it off the stockmarket, or that it is in talks with another group about the acquisition of a major operation in the midlands.

Under new ownership: Stagecoach London target for Australian bankers

Stagecoach London will continue to be run by its existing management. After managing director Barry Arnold retires in August, his place will be taken by managing director designate Nigel Barrett as planned. Macquarie will license the Stagecoach brand for a time before rolling out an, as yet undecided, identity of its own.

Stagecoach London holds around 16% of the market, operating 1,300 vehicles and employing 4,300 staff. The company owns ten depots in east London and runs over 80 routes on behalf of TfL through two companies.

A Macquarie spokesperson says the purchase is in line with the company's acquisition policy to buy stable companies with predictable returns. It already has a number of holdings in the transport sector, but apart from an accessible minibus service in Sydney, Australia, it does not have any other public transport interests. Macquarie Bank is listed on the Australian Stock Exchange, with a market capitalisation of approximately £6.2bn. Its total assets are approximately £43.7bn, with a further £57.8bn in assets under management.

Kent operators await 'summit' meeting

Kent operators are still awaiting a 'summit meeting' with the council to resolve issues relating to its tendering procedures.

At the first full meeting of the newly-formed Kent Bus & Coach Operators Group in Sevenoaks, members were told that Kent County Council's commercial services boss Kevin Harlock had reassured operators that nobody would be excluded from tendering.

"The outcome was an undertaking to discuss those conditions, and KCC's preference was for a collective such as this," said John Burch, of the CPT.

But with a contract review by KCC expected to take place this month, the group said they were concerned that time for the crucial meeting could be running out, and Mr Burch suggested that the group should push for the meeting to take place.

The meeting also heard that the tendering is administered from the same location as the base of passenger services – the KCC operating company that competes for the contracts. Members expressed concern that this left KCC open to accusations of 'rigging'. "There is a realisation that the structure is flawed," said chairman Norman Kemp, of Nu Venture.

The meeting heard that emergency tenders had also been a source of concern. When one operator suddenly went out of business, the contract was not offered to another company which worked from the same yard. "But operators need to allow the council some space to cover tenders after 'Friday failures'," cautioned Mr Kemp.

The meeting, in the Sevenoaks offices of Belmont International, also discussed deficiencies in the Traveline service. "Members experience horrendously poor information on the Traveline South East website," said Mr Kemp.

Eric Baldock, of Autocar, said that every service published in April had a mistake in the information.

"There are a lot of problems stemming from the apparent inability to process timetable changes on time. I suspect it's a lack of understanding of the registration process."

Shotgun Setra

A Setra coach operated by Plan Ahead of Friern Barnet, North London, was thought to have been blasted by a shotgun on Monday June 26 en route to Gatwick Airport. No passengers were aboard the coach at the time. It was travelling to Gatwick, under contract to Demauris Associates Ltd, to pick up passengers and transfer them to Southbourne, Hampshire, when the incident occurred.

The coach driver reported hearing a loud bang. When he looked round a hole had been punched in an offside window behind the driver's seat and then all the glass suddenly fell out.

The incident occurred between junctions 8 and 9 on the M25.

Pam Dobbins of Plan Ahead said: "If this is a shotgun attack then something needs doing to stop this sort of behaviour before anyone is killed or seriously injured. Our driver was severely shocked and although he saw no-one with a gun he suspects a shot must have come from a vehicle travelling in the opposite carriageway.

"I've been told another operator has suffered three similar attacks."

Local transport debate

Additional funding for public transport in the regions will be discussed with backbenchers before the comprehensive spending review for 2007 is published, following a pledge by transport minister Gillian Merron in a debate on the future of local transport funding.

MP Paul Truswell, who secured the debate, highlighted the growing gap between spending in London and the regions. He quoted spending per head in the capital having risen from £223 in 2001 to £631, while in the same period the amount in Yorkshire and Humberside had only risen from £117 to £197.

He said that raising the economic performance of regions, required acceleration of infrastructure issues such as public transport.

"Unless we obtain more investment in public transport, the combination of traffic congestion, and a public transport network that cannot cope will begin to choke our communities and strangle economic growth in cities such as Leeds," he said.

Replying to the debate, Ms Merron said that the government had replaced annual bids for funding with five-year plans. She said that the local transport planning system has provided local authorities with a new level of certainty about funding, so that they can tackle local issues that often require a long-term view, such as improving road maintenance, securing better traffic management, enhancing road safety or making buses more accessible and integrated.

PTEG is calling for more money to be spent on transport in the regions ahead of next year's comprehensive spending review. A report commissioned from transport consultants JMP says that halving the funding gap between London and the regions would generate £4bn a year to be invested in transport projects.

Drivers from Arriva's German subsidiary Sippel are being used to chauffeur World Cup stars to matches during the tournament. Sippel drivers are responsible for transporting ten teams, but sadly not England. Each team has been provided with either a Mercedes-Benz Travego, or a Setra S415 GT-HD. Karl Kolmsee, from Arriva Deutschland, said: "Our new vehicles look stunning in the country colours and our drivers are enjoying every moment of being part of this World Cup. It's not every day you get to welcome Ronaldinho, Totti or Figo on board your bus!" Arriva bought the Frankfurt-based business, Sippel, in February 2005. In Germany Arriva operates bus services in the Rhine-Main area.

Briefly

Cllr Mark Dowd, chair of Merseytravel, has written an open letter to Mayor of London Ken Livingstone thanking him for his support for the regulation of buses outside London. In the letter he says: "we very much admire what you have achieved on transport in general, and on bus services in particular, and we share your view that none of this would have been possible without regulation". Mr Dowd also says the Bill used to introduce the national concessionary fares scheme may provide an opportunity to "remove some of the hurdles that local authorities face in introducing the franchising of services".

The Government has received 60 appeals over the concessionary travel scheme. Appeals had to be submitted by the end of April, after the scheme's introduction on April 1. The DfT has not named the operators, just the councils whose schemes are being appealed against. No time limit on reaching a decision was specified in the legislation.

Two people were taken to hospital at the weekend after a minibus overturned on the M23 near Gatwick. Eleven people were on board according to reports, although there were no other injuries reported. No immediate cause was apparent.

Phil White, departing chief executive of National Express Group, has been appointed non-executive director of construction company Kier Group. He takes up the position on July 1.

The Transport Select Committee last week branded parking laws a "mess" and pressed for the abolition of incentives. Nationwide, 15,000 wardens issue 7.1m notices annually, and raise £450m in fines.

Briefly

Go-Ahead subsidiary London General will operate the special Wimbledon service during the tennis championship, using Olympian deckers. The limited stop service runs from Marble Arch, costing £6 return and £4.50 concessions. Bus passes, TfL tickets, travelcards, etc, cannot be used.

GMPTE evaluated a Wrights Electrocity hybrid bus on its First-operated free Metro shuttle bus in Manchester city centre for two days last week. The trial reportedly went well. First's engineering director Colin Stafford says: "First impressions are very good. We hope to get back to the PTA soon with our results so it can decide if it wants to introduce them to service." Wrights claims the diesel-electric hybrid Electrocity cuts NOX emissions by nearly 90%, with 83% less carbon monoxide, and 38% less carbon dioxide, cuts fuel consumption by 40%, and noise by 30%.

The strike action hitting Nottingham City Transport services has been resolved. TGWU workers voted to accept a new pay offer which sees wages rise by 35p per hour. The extra 15p an hour over the company's original offer will be funded from productivity savings, says the company, plus other changes to drivers' conditions in terms of "uniforms and duties in service". The union held three one-day strikes on Saturdays.

Ian Butcher, group finance director of the Go-Ahead Group is relinquishing the role of company secretary. The board has appointed Carolyn Sephton, currently assistant company secretary, as his replacement with immediate effect.

An Arriva bus carrying 21 schoolchildren was invoved in a crash with a car in Kent on Monday, although no injuries were reported. The bus mounted a pavement and crashed through a garden wall.

ADL looking to the future with hybrids

Now Falkirk firm could get government funding

Secretary of State for Transport Douglas Alexander visited Alexander Dennis' Falkirk factory last week to discuss government funding to help 'productionise' its new hybrid technology.

The company also announced a revised sales target for its new Enviro 400 decker, along with an 'executive' specification of the vehicle, to be used for First Group Park and Ride services in Devon and Cornwall.

ADL says it has 'cracked' its hybrid driveline technology - said to halve emissions - but now needs help to put it into production. The company previously received £750,000 in government funding towards the £3.5m it has spent on product development since it was rescued from the collapsed Mayflower Corporation in 2004. A source at the company said the minister was "warm to the sentiments discussed at the meeting".

ADL chairman Bill Cameron says: "We believe we now have a proven solution with the potential to reduce CO_2 and harmful pollutants by up to 50 per cent, but there is a long way from a concept development vehicle to something that can be manufactured and make sense in economic terms. The investment required will be significant - in the millions - and we are now in talks with government sources to examine how we can approach the issue on a united front. The strength of the business case will determine the speed at which we can achieve an end result. Having said this, CO_2 emissions and global warming represent the biggest issues facing mankind, so we may not want to ponder too long."

The company's first hybrid product will be the Enviro200H, based on its new Enviro200Dart midibus. It will be launched at the end of the year. The Enviro200Dart will be formally launched on July 19. ADL says the Enviro400 has been selling well since its introduction last autumn. Its original sales target was 200 units in its first year, now revised to 300 following recent orders from Metroline (12), Travel London (27), Stagecoach (10) and First Group (9).

Secretary of State for Transport, Douglas Alexander (left), meets ADL's Bill Cameron, who is seeking government funding for hybrid technology

The nine Enviro400s for First Devon & Cornwall Park & Ride specification includes leather-trimmed coach seats, passenger information relayed through two large TFT screens in each saloon, a four-channel radio to each seat, an air chill and extraction system and cab air conditioning.

These orders, together with 40 more in the pipeline, are worth £15m to the company. In addition, ADL is also in line to supply 14 Enviro500 tri-axle deckers to Go Transit in Toronto, Canada, and 12 open-top versions to Les Car Rouge for various locations on the US west coast, adding up to another £10m.

Select committee investigation begins

The House of Commons' Transport Select Committee launched its investigation into bus services in the UK last week, but even as the committee convened there were rumours that its inquiry has been superceded.

The BBC's Politics Show claimed that the government had decided to introduce the London-style system around the rest of the country and would be making the announcement later this year.

But the CPT says the BBC's information was incorrect.

Either way, the select committee's investigations were not solely into regulation. Other matters such as the financing and funding for local community services, concessionary fares, the lack of uptake of quality contracts, the role of the traffic commissioner, and the London model of bus services were also under consideration.

Appearing before the committee this week was the, broadly, pro-regulation lobby, including the PTEs and the TGWU.

Next week, the 11-strong all-party committee, chaired by Labour MP Gwyneth Dunwoody, has called representatives from the 'big five' PLCs, senior traffic commissioner Philip Brown, and transport minister Gillian Merron. The CPT will not make a representation.

New ADL Tridents feature prominent marketing to attract passengers

New buses and campaign push for Blackpool

Blackpool Transport Services has continued upgrading its busiest route with the purchase of five East Lancs-bodied ADL Tridents, coupled with a new marketing push, featuring the "I'm on the bus" advertising campaign.

Over 10,000 promotional leaflets have been delivered door-to-door along the Cleveleys to St Annes and Lytham service route, which operates eight buses per hour and requires 22 at peak.

The new 77-seat vehicles take BTS's lowfloor Trident total to 32, and the lowfloor contingent to 50 per cent of the 180-vehicle bus fleet, although over 60 per cent of journeys are now made on lowfloor buses. The new deckers are all fitted with a five-camera CCTV system, and with over 50 buses now fitted with cameras, there has been a significant reduction in vandalism on the company's buses. Route 11, which is operated by an equal number of single and double deckers is now halfway towards a lowfloor conversion, which could be completed next year.

The new marketing campaign includes a promotion on the 30-day All Zones Card which costs £50, where an extra 10 days free travel will be added on, bringing the cost of unlimited travel on the bus and tram network down to £1.25 per day. The new buses feature massive photos of real local people, with a message challenging the view that motoring to work is enjoyable.

One of the new buses has been named after former operations manager Arthur Topham, who died suddenly last month after 38 years of service with the company. Operations director David Eaves said that he felt this to be a fitting tribute to a member of the senior management team.

Norfolk Green takes First EC to the OFT

The boss of Norfolk Green has hit back at First Eastern Counties' assertion last week that "All is fair in love, war and bus services". The two are competing on a bus route between King's Lynn and Spalding in retaliation, says Norfolk's Ben Colson, for Norfolk Green registering King's Lynn town services against the transport giant.

He says: "All is not fair in bus services, there are certain things you cannot do, and that is why we have referred this matter to the Office of Fair Trading."

Colson says that he registered services in King's Lynn because he saw "clear signs of the market failing". First EC had raised fares on several occasions this year, frequencies were being reduced and passenger numbers falling.

He claims that two weeks before the Norfolk Green services were due to start First EC cut its fares by 60%.

We incorrectly stated last week that Norfolk Green's fares in King's Lynn were pitched at half First EC's. In fact the fare levels are similar, held below the cost of production by First, according to Colson, which forms the basis of his complaint to the OFT.

First Glasgow under fire for network cuts

First has come under fire for wholesale service cuts in Glasgow. Just weeks after the company announced the completion of a 220 vehicle order, 50 routes will be either reduced or cut altogether.

All night services from Sunday to Wednesday will be withdrawn. First blames rising fuel and insurance costs.

Ronnie Park, First Glasgow director of service delivery says: "We have taken the decision to reduce the number of journeys where passenger numbers are extremely low and fares collected do not cover even the basic cost of operation. This is particularly evident on night services, where the patronage would have to increase generally by over 200% to cover our operating costs."

"We are therefore reluctantly withdrawing our 24-hour night services, however we will continue to provide a revised night bus service on most routes, which will operate on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights."

A spokesman for Strathclyde Partnership for Transport says: "It's a situation that concerns us because we only have a limited amount of money with which to plug the gaps and subsidise routes. It's now getting to the stage where it's not sustainable and clearly we need to look at the bus industry and work with it to come up with a solution.

"A lot of the areas affected are in deprived parts of Glasgow, areas where people would not necessarily have cars or the means to pay for a taxi."

Briefly

The Government is to extend the ban on smoking to places where there is "an inevitable close grouping of people" – and that means bus stops.
The upcoming Health Bill bans smoking in pubs and restaurants and is due to come into force next year.

Forty per cent of 14 and 15-year-olds say they are using the car less since the introduction of free under-16s travel in London. By the end of March 2006, trips by the under-16s had increased by 20%, resulting in an overall increase in bus use of 2.2%.

Retailers in Swansea are already complaining about the infrastructure upgrades being made to support FTR. Small businesses along the route say they were not given enough notice of road works.
The council says a three-day briefing was held last October, although it admits the finer points of the works were not finalised until May 25. The work will be completed by November. The FTR will go into service in 2008.

Bradford Council is meeting this week to consider an action plan on bus lane parking enforcement. The council took over responsibility for wardens last year. It proposes a dedicated squad of wardens to stop cars blocking bus lanes in the city.

An elderly woman was sent flying through the back of a bus shelter after it was hit by a bus in a freak accident. The incident occurred last Thursday in Hyndland Road, Glasgow. The woman was taken to hospital but was not thought to be seriously injured.

A man has died after being hit by a bus in Bristol. Robert Biedal, 33, a Polish national, reportedly fell into the path of the vehicle on Friday evening. He was taken to hospital, but died on Saturday. The driver was unhurt but said to be 'very shaken'.

COACHES

Briefly

CBW incorrectly reported last week that Sea View Coaches had Volvo Plaxtons and Dennis Javelins in their fleet. Their fleet of 18 vehicles is in fact made up of eight MAN Noges, three Ayat Atlantis', three DAF Van Hools, two Beulas Ivecos and the two Temsa Safari HDs.

The CV Show organisers say this year's event attracted a record number of visitors and exhibitors. Figures just released say that 30,376 people attended this year's event, which featured 672 exhibitors. Next year's show will again be at the NEC, from April 24-26.

Operators using Glasgow Airport on an occasional basis should contact Linda McDade (tel: 0141 848 4010) to arrange access to the coach park in Bute Road. BAA has recently introduced a charge for coaches using the airport.

Pupils from a Belfast school had a lucky escape at the weekend when their coach caught fire in the French Alps. Four teachers and 30 children were aboard. The vehicle was evacuated in time, with no injuries, but some luggage was destroyed in the blaze. French police say they are still establishing the cause.

Tony Blair has got involved in the long-running dispute over the routing of the bypass at Stonehenge. Five options are currently under consideration, including a tunnel, priced at over £500m, for the site, which has become a congestion hotspot in recent years. The Prime Minister says the results of the public consultation will be considered by the DfT over the summer.

The A2 motorway in Canton, Switzerland, has been closed owing to a rock fall. It will remain closed until further notice. Traffic is being diverted via the Mont Blanc tunnel, the Simplon, the Grand St Bernard and the A13 motorway (San Bernardino).

The first in a long procession of coaches leaves Ascot by the scenic route on Saturday at the end of a long week. The event returned to its Berkshire home this year after the famous racecourse was revamped in 2005. Operators report no major problems, although 20,000 extra punters certainly made the traffic jams longer.

New laws to stop Phoenix operators

Impounding laws are being considered by government chiefs to put the brakes on phoenix operators and those who are banned and move operations abroad.

Delegates at a VOSA workshop in Newcastle last week were told officials were currently looking into the problem of banned operators who flout rules to get back in business.

And they were told impounding laws similar to those governing HGVs could be introduced under possible law changes.

Gary Washer, of VOSA, said: "We are aware and we are concerned about such operators. At the moment other European countries don't use checks as stringently as we do.

"But we are looking at making changes to rules so that we can use impounding laws similar to HGVs.

"It would take a change to the current Act of Parliament, but impounding is something that should be investigated to stop these operators flouting the rules."

He also urged operators to report any phoenix or foreign-flagged operators that were banned in the UK to contact VOSA's confidential telephone line.

One coach operator said: "We hope this comes into force. There are two operators in this area who are running coaches even though they've been banned. They are quite brazen about it."

Peace of mind on offer from Scania

Scania has launched a new leasing package aimed at operators worried about new and future regulations.

The offer is initially being targeted at operators in the London area concerned about buying new vehicles ahead of the introduction of the Low Emission Zone, but is available to operators throughout the country. The lease package also includes a repair and maintenance contract and digital tachograph training.

The lease lasts for four years, at the end of which the customer chooses whether to keep the vehicle or not.

If regulations like the LEZ have come into effect by then, and the coach is effectively obsolete, the vehicle can be returned to Scania. If the LEZ is not in operation by then the customer has the option of keeping the vehicle.

The new deal is available on any Euro 3 vehicle in the Scania range, including Berkhof-bodied vehicles.

"The offer is aimed at operators nervous about legislation like the Low Emission Zone," says Bob Nevitt, Scania's general manager for retail sales. "We are aiming to give them some piece of mind. If the legislation does not come in they can keep the vehicle. If it does come in then we will take the vehicle off their hands."

The package also offers a short cut to digital tachograph training. Part of the package can include digitach training at Scania's facility in Loughborough, or at your own premises if a number of drivers need training.

Golden Prospect

Prospects looking good: the new Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7Rs

Prospect Coaches of Lye in the West Midlands is enjoying its golden anniversary year with two new vehicles for the fleet as well as being given an 'Investors in People' award.

The firm's roots can be traced back to the taxi and minibus service set up by Geoff Watts 50 years ago in Stourbridge. Business quickly grew for Geoff, who set up depots across Wales and the West Midlands, mainly providing contract services for large employers.

Changing employment patterns in the late 70s disturbed many of these contracts and Prospect diverted its attention to schools.

"Schools are us," says Roslynd, Geoff's daughter, who works for her father as marketing director. "We serve more than 150 schools and have even had one school book a coach for May 2008. It's a bit frightening when you think about it."

Prospect's new Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7Rs are the first new vehicles the company has bought since five Ford coaches were taken into stock more than 25 years ago.

The new Profiles are fully DDA-compliant, which is something the firm are keen to offer to customers.

Roslynd said: "There is definitely an opening in the market for these vehicles. A number of schools had requested that we provide this type of vehicle and the bookings we have already received confirm that this was the way to go."

The vehicles have had a golden anniversary crown painted on the Prospect logo and are both carrying personalised PR06 registrations to ensure they stand out. Geoff is still at the helm of the business which now employs 30 people and runs 35 vehicles.

Wight parking permit stolen

The Isle of Wight's coach parking was under scrutiny against last week – but this time thanks to a light-fingered thief.

Kettering-based operator Breakaway Coach Holidays had parked its Scania PB in the council-owned coach parking at Sandown, its driver paying £60 for the permit. But the next morning, it had gone.

"It appears someone used a crowbar on the continental door," said MD John Neild. "The only thing stolen was the permit."

Mr Neild said he was surprised because the permit carried the registration number of his coach so would be easily identifiable. But he believes another coach driver was the culprit.

"The Hotel Trouville where we were staying offered to pay for another permit, but the council issued a temporary document to cover the parking," he said.

Mr Neild said the door skin had been damaged but the door had been sprung without any lasting damage to the locking pins, so the coach was still usable.

At the time of going to press, the missing coach parking permit had not been recovered.

WHO'S PARTS?

ELECTRO-MAGNETIC COMPRESSOR CLUTCHES AND FAN DRIVES

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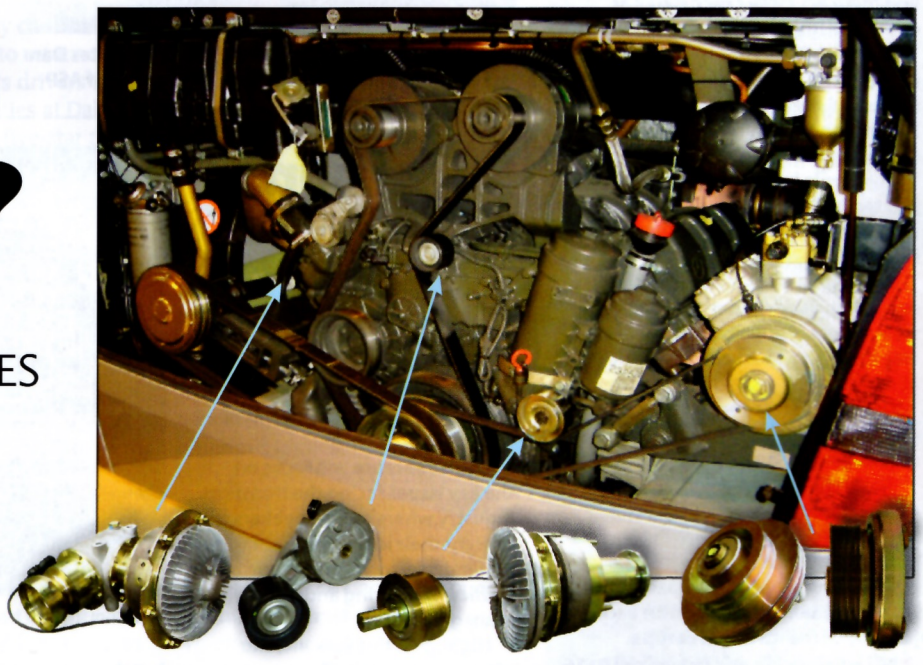

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LINNIG Antriebstechnik produces products for nearly all bus and A/C - producers such as:

EvoBus (Setra, Mercedes)
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Leicester's National Space Centre

DEAL OF THE WEEK

Three of the biggest tourist attractions in the Midlands have teamed up to become what they are calling the "must-see three" for visitors to the area.

Twycross Zoo, Conkers and the National Space Centre are offering a special ticket to all of these attractions for £50 for a family of four, a 40% discount on normal admission prices. The offer lasts until March 15.

The ticket is flexible and can be used to see attractions on different dates, or on the same day.

Coach drivers will get free entry to all three venues as well as refreshments and there are large coach parks at each attraction.

Twycross Zoo is dedicated to preserving threatened species through successful breeding programmes. Everything from elephants to sea lions can be seen and fed here.

Conkers is just 15 minutes away, located in the heart of the national forest near Ashby-de-la-Zouch in Derbyshire.

It has more than 100 interactive exhibits included a simulated tree-top walk, where visitors can make their way through a moving forest canopy at night.

Outside is more than 100 acres of grounds and lakes, complete with a challenging assault course.

The National Space Centre is about a 40-minute journey away, situated in Leicester.

Games and simulations test the ability to survive in deep space and a 3D display takes visitors on an exciting journey to the ice moon Europa.

■ For information and tickets call 0116 2582158 or email info@mustsee3.co.uk. Details are also on the website at www.mustsee3.co.uk.

must see 3
stay·play·explore

Calls will be answered 24/7

A new out-of-hours call answering service from the Albatross Travel Group plans to make tour operators reachable round the clock.

After talking to clients, Albatross found the one thing customers wanted most was the option to contact operators outside the normal nine-to-five working day and the new service gives them the ability to do this.

Dan Fox, general manager of the newly-launched Albatross Specialist Products (ASP), says: "It became apparent that customers often can't ring during business hours, and people just don't leave messages any more, so we decided to set up a full, professional call answering service."

Albatross MD Sean Taggart (right) congratulates Dan Fox on his appointment as general manager of ASP

Customers seeking information, or who want to book a coach tour, will have their call diverted to a centre open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Workers at one of the UK's leading call centres will answer the phone with the company's name and deal with the query. A script of the conversation will then be emailed, faxed or texted to the operator to deal with.

A pay-as-you-go service, similar to mobile phones, will mean the fee will be directly linked to the number of calls dealt with, at £1.30 per minute.

Another option for operators is the dedicated service, which is like a mobile phone contract where the fee is 90p per minute.

As well as answering calls, bookings can be taken and information brochures can be dispatched on behalf of your business.

■ More information on this service is available at www.albatross-tours.com or ring Dan Fox on 01732 875791.

Strasbourg hosts ETC

The annual European Transport Conference (ETC), a leading event for transport managers and tour operators, is being held in Strasbourg between September 18 and 20.

The conference will focus on the key issues facing the transport industry where guest speakers will present their ideas on planning for land use, travel and tourism, traffic engineering and street management.

Highlights this year include plenary sessions by Zoltan Kazatsay, deputy director general of the European Commission, and the man responsible for traffic and transport at the World Cup, Andreas Maatz.

Organised social events are also taking place, including a walking tour of Strasbourg, an informal Alsacien dinner and a gala dinner at the Auberge de Kochersberg hotel.

Strasbourg will host the ETC conference

The conference will be held at the Palais de la Musique et des Congres in Strasbourg.

Accommodation is not provided, but hotels are offering competitive room rates for anyone attending, details of which can be found at www.aetransport.org. Hotel rooms can also be booked through the Strasbourg tourist office on +333 88522828.

Rob Sheldon, board chair of the Association of European Transport, said: "The conference has been running since 1973 and is viewed as the leading sector event. It is a forum for sharing experiences, new ideas and innovation, and is an ideal opportunity to network with our mainland European counterparts."

DIESEL PRICES

Cost per litre in pence:	
Great Britain	99.00
Norway	94.85
Italy	85.52
Sweden	83.66
Germany	77.16
Netherlands	76.13
Belgium	75.85
Switzerland	75.52
France	75.26
Ireland	74.98
Portugal	74.64
Austria	71.46
Hungary	70.64
Czech Republic	70.64
Poland	70.15
Spain	67.23
Luxembourg	65.04

HOLIDAY POUND

£1 will get you:	
Euro	1.50
Switzerland *(Franc)*	2.29
Norway *(Kroner)*	12.32
Hungary *(Forint)*	405.24
Czech Republic *(Koruna)*	41.83
Poland *(Zloty)*	5.96

Dalton Park: the north east's newest shopping centre

Shoppers head to Dalton

The newest retail attraction to hit the north-east is drawing in more than 60,000 shopaholics a week who are taking advantage of up to 50% off high street prices.

Dalton Park, set in 55 acres of parkland just south of Newcastle, has more than 60 shops and now, once a month, a popular French food market.

The park is becoming increasingly popular with coaches and it's not surprising considering the incentives: The coach driver's loyalty card offers financial incentives to return to the complex and gets drivers free tea and coffee. Facilities at Dalton are first-class with a five-star toilet that has been named 'loo of the year 2006'!

Entrance to the park is simple, with a dropping-off point outside the main entrance. From there, drivers need to travel up a slight hill to the coach park where there is room to turn around and for seven vehicles to park up.

Dalton would be an ideal day trip for operators in the run up to Christmas when Santa's grotto will be back and the Christmas market will be bustling.

Dalton Park is a 15-minute drive from the A1(M) at Sunderland, exiting from junction 26.

■ For more information, call 0191 526 6157, or go to www.dalton-park.co.uk.

Suffolk targets US anniversary

Suffolk is looking to cash in on America's 400th anniversary next year with the launch of a tourist trail dedicated to its founding grandfather, captain Bartholomew Gosnold.

Tourism bosses are hoping the wave of enthusiasm being generated in America for the anniversary will translate into interest in travelling to key sites in Suffolk and Norfolk connected to the Gosnold story.

Gosnold is believed to be the leading light in an expedition to the New World in 1607, some 13 years before the Pilgrim Fathers set sail on the Mayflower.

The Suffolk Development Agency's (SDA) Tourism Partnership has established a friends of America group which aims to promote links between America and the region, taking tourists from traditional tourism hotspots like Bath, London, Stratford-Upon-Avon and Edinburgh.

Scott Dolling, the SDA's destination marketing manager, said: "Suffolk offers many links for the US market and with this 400th anniversary there is a strong focus for us to reach out to Americans.

"The Gosnold trail will help bring visitors around the key sites of the county which benefit many areas often missed off the tourist trail."

2012 provides big opportunity

The 2012 Olympic Games in London will provide British tourism's biggest opportunity for a generation according to the government's tourism minister.

It is thought tourists will spend as much as £1 billion in the UK in the run up to the Games in London.

Tourism minister, Shaun Woodward, said: "To make the most of all the opportunities for future growth we must act now and lay strong foundations that will shape British tourism for generations to come. They are a catalyst for getting so much done and for creating so many opportunities both at Games' time and as an investment in our tourism industry in the future."

Briefly

A campaign to raise the number of people holidaying in the UK has received such a positive response in its first week that it has been extended to run for six months. Family Fun was launched on Monday by Visit Britain and is aimed at raising the profile of UK tourist attractions. The campaign includes a website highlighting the top attractions such as Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Warwick Castle and Hadrian's Wall. On the site there are also sections for children to rate their favourite places as well as a page for parents, which has details of accommodation and prices. Visit Britain said UK families spend £12bn a year on holidays in their own country and while 59% of families still take domestic holidays, the number taking trips abroad is rising at a faster rate. Laurence Bush, of Enjoy England, said: "Families account for 45% of the UK's population and encouraging even a fraction of these 27 million people to enjoy England could help raise the value of England's £57bn visitor economy." Research indicates the cost of a British holiday has fallen compared to foreign package trips, which Enjoy England believes is something that the industry needs to capitalise on. The interactive website can be found at www.enjoyengland.com/family.

visit Britain

The government minister for culture, media and sport has launched a new initiative which aims to get all hospitality businesses to sign up to a new common standards system. According to minister Shaun Woodward, Visit Britain's system would drive up standards across hotels and B&Bs and has set a target for 80% of firms to sign up by 2010. The minister also wants a summit to address how best to utilise the Thames as a resource in time for the Olympic Games.

"Times They Are A-Changing" *by* Scania

"Those in the know have always recognised our vehicles as a class act. Durable. Reliable. Quiet, powerful engines. Good fuel economy.

But we're now stepping up a gear. Correction: several gears.

Our portfolio of innovative vehicles is expanding rapidly. (Watch this space.)

And, while our 90 strong UK network continues maintaining all our vehicles, 17 specialist centres have been established to handle the more complex procedures. The technicians in these centres are hand-picked and – for your convenience – all centres are strategically located near major routes.

Make no mistake. This company is fast becoming a major force in the UK bus and coach industry.

Want to know more about our future and yours? Then please do give me a call."

Geoff Bell
Bus & Coach Director
Scania (Great Britain) Ltd
e-mail: geoff.bell@scania.com
Tel: 07974 357748

SCANIA
Peace of mind™

Briefly

The schoolgirl seriously injured after falling out of a school bus in Cheshire last month is already well on her way to recovery. Her parents say they are waiting for the results of a VOSA inspection of the vehicle before deciding whether to pursue legal action. The 11-year-old girl fell out of the emergency exit while the vehicle was in motion. She reportedly remembers everything up until the accident.

Clackmannanshire Council in Scotland has invested £30,000 in CCTV systems aboard its large school buses. Fourteen vehicles have been earmarked for the cameras. Single deckers will be fitted with four cameras, and deckers with six. Pupils caught smoking face "substantial" fines.

Centro-PTA is examining the case for introducing yellow school buses in its area after a dramatic fall-off in the number of pupils using school services following a fares increase.
An 8% TWM fare rise has reportedly led to 873,024 fewer school bus trips in just a three-month period. Centro-PTA chairman, Cllr Gary Clarke – who sits on the Conservative Party's School Bus Working Party – says yellow buses have a "powerful appeal".
TWM says the figures are skewed by changes in school holiday times.

A coach company in Scotland has retained its school bus contracts despite vociferous objection from one councillor.
The councillor in East Kilbride put forward a motion to exclude the company because it is engaged in a long-running battle with local residents over parking.
South Lanarkshire Council has even reportedly taken out an enforcement order against the operator, but the company was defended by both another councillor and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, who said the company met the necessary criteria.

Teachers to be taught to drive?

DfES discussing PCV training for school minibus drivers

Government education officials are considering changing the law so that teachers will be forced to hold PCV licences before driving school mini-buses, operators have been told.

CBW has learned that the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is currently discussing changes to the present rules, which allow teachers to drive minibuses with normal car licences.

The news was revealed last week at a DVO operator workshop in Newcastle after operators pushed Department for Transport officials over their concerns that teachers were exempt from PCV tests.

Terry Barnard, of the DfT, told the workshop: "The Department of Education is looking at this and their starting position is that teachers who drive minibuses should have PCVs. But this is still being discussed at the moment and still for negotiation."

Operators told the meeting they were unhappy that teachers did not have to adhere to the strict PCV rules and were unlikely to be ordered to hold Driver Certificates of Professional Competence (CPC).

Nigel Harries, the Driving Standards Agency's assistant chief driving examiner, had told the meeting that CPC laws would raise the standards of driving in the PCV and HGV industries.

But he admitted: "Teachers are exempt from CPC and are not asked to take PCV. CPC improvements are to ensure the industry is more professional and we will take these concerns on board."

One operator told *CBW*: "They say they want a level playing field, but this isn't. If the DfES is looking at the changes we would welcome that. It seems crazy that a mini-bus carrying children driven by a teacher doesn't have to meet the same standards as our drivers doing the same job."

The Government is considering changing the law so that school minibus drivers must hold PCV licences

Northumberland misses out on a pot of cash

Northumberland County Council says its failure to complete grant application forms on time would not have affected its proposed cuts to post-16 and faith school transport.

Despite reminders, the council missed a deadline to apply for funding from the Learning and Skills Council's transport partnership fund last September. Neighbouring councils who did apply received sums of between £147,000 and £355,000.

A Northumberland County Council spokesman said: "The county council is currently investigating the circumstances surrounding a funding application deadline which was missed last September.

"We are carrying out an investigation and when this is complete will take any appropriate action in line with the findings. However, the council had discussions about this with the LSC and did not believe it would affect the year's funding."

Subsequent to missing the deadline, Northumberland announced it wanted to save £600,000 a year providing free home to school transport for about 700 children in the county, and it raised the price of its post-16 student pass to £360/year.

But the spokesman says cuts to student transport would have happened anyway. He says: "The county council currently spends £1 million a year on post-16 transport. As the council needs to find around £30 million of savings over the next few years, this funding was under review along with other discretionary services as part of the council's budget-setting process."

First glimpse: the new American-built FC coach looks distinctly European but is actually front-engined

Americans unveil new euro-look coach

American school bus manufacturer I C Corporation has released photographs of its first commercial coach range.

Despite its European looks, the FC Series coach pictured here is actually front-engined although another model in the new five vehicle range, the RC Series, is rear engined.

The other three vehicles are based on the classic American school bus look, albeit updated.

The integral FC has a 225bhp engine from parent company International, push-button Allison B300 Series five-speed transmission and air brakes with ABS. The longest version is just over 12m long, with seating for 44 passengers, although a 22-seat option is available. Front suspension is parabolic taper leaf springs, with vari-rate suspension at the rear. Air suspension is optional.

IC Corporation is the largest school bus manufacturer in America and is part of the International Truck and Engine Corporation.

It has also recently launched a hybrid version of its classic school bus.

First Chinese buses in Africa

The first Chinese buses to be exported to Africa have been put into service in Mozambique.

The 35 Yutong buses, built by the Zhengzhou Yutong Bus Company, will operate in seven cities around the country. A further 20 buses will be delivered later this year.

The latter shipment will include four gas powered vehicles for a pilot project in the Mozambican capital, Maputo.

The order was signed by Mozambique's prime minister during an official visit to Beijing in September 2005.

"There are clearly more advantages in importing buses from China, because via Europe or America the price is two or three times higher," he said at the time.

In 2005, the Yutong Automobile Co Ltd exported over 2,400 buses, valued at US$140 million. In 2004, the company, which is China's largest bus manufacturer, sold US$5 million in vehicles to Cuba, Iran, Chile, Egypt and Bangladesh.

The use of Chinese buses in Mozambique follows the arrival of the first shipment of trucks manufactured in China, ordered by Maputo-based dealer Shanghai Commercial. It will also import minibuses and tourist buses from China.

Micro-reactor cuts biodiesel costs

Research technologists at Arlington college of Engineering, part of the University of Texas, have developed a micro-reactor claimed to reduce the time required to process biodiesel. The speedier process will also cut the cost of production by 30-40%.

Associate dean of engineering - research, Dr. Richard Billo, says: "This is an amazing breakthrough. The micro-reactor takes what is now a 90-minute process to convert vegetable oil to biodiesel fuel and reduces it to less than four minutes. In some cases the process has been cut down to as little as six seconds, depending on some beginning variables.

"We've developed the cost analysis and conducted pilot experiments, and the savings in time and money are both phenomenal and realistic."

The micro-reactor is the brainchild of Professor Brian Dennis. It is said to create a continuous production of biodiesel which is made possible because the mixing of the reactants takes place on a microscale. Therefore complete chemical reaction is much faster than in traditional batch reactors.

Using a number of microreactors in parallel allows one large-scale operation to produce the same amount of biodiesel per year as a traditional batch production plant.

Prof. Dennis adds: "Whereas traditional plants costs tens of millions of dollars, the microreactor will be the size of a small suitcase and cost in the order of hundreds of dollars."

Prof. Dennis is now seeking commercial investment to support the development of the scheme and to create a prototype for large-scale production.

Events

2006 JULY

18 National Transport Awards Dinner, London Hilton on Park Lane 01224 263134.
19 9th UK Chairs Of Transport Conference, CBI Conference Centre London 01224 263134.
20 Intelligent Transport Systems event. DTI Conference Centre, London.

AUGUST

8-10 RDA Workshop, Cologne Fair Mega Hall (hall 10). +49 22112 0448.

SEPTEMBER

9-10 Bus Driver of the Year, 40th anniversary, Blackpool. www.bdoy.co.uk 0161 427 5986.
12-15 Operator's Workshop, Calvados - La Manche, France. 01179 860381.
21-28 IAA International Motor Show, Hannover, Germany. Mon-Fri day ticket €18, Weekend day ticket €10. +49 69975 07252.
28-29 International Group Leisure & Travel Show, NEC, Birmingham. www.leisureshow.com

OCTOBER

10-12 CTA National Community & Voluntary Transport Event, G-Mex Centre, Manchester. www.communitytransport.com. +44 870 774 3586.
19-24 Busworld Europe Kortrijk.

NOVEMBER

6-9 World Travel Market, ExCel, London. www.wtmlondon.com
7-9 Euro Bus Expo, NEC. 0870 224 8619, eurobusxpo@expom.co.uk
14-17 FIAA '06 Exhibition (bus and coach), Madrid, Spain. +34 91 722 5000.
24-25 Coach and Bus Show 2006, RDS, Dublin. www.cttc.ie, c.collins.cttc@iol.ie

2007 JANUARY

13 Excursions, Tourism Southeast's free-entry show at Alexandra Palace. 023 80625400.
26 School Transport 07 Conference, Barbican Centre, London. 0207 324 4330. www.neilstewartassociates.com/st125.

MARCH

13-14 British Travel Trade Fair, Birmingham NEC. 0172 773 8860.

APRIL

24-26 Commercial Vehicle Show, NEC Arena, Birmingham. 01634 261262.

Regional News

CBW takes a look at the big issues where you live in our round-up of the regions. If you've got a local issue you would like us to cover, contact Andrew Peace at *andrew.peace@rouncymedia.co.uk*

SCOTLAND

Local services in Argyll & Bute and Ayrshire have been awarded substantial grant funding from the Scottish Executive.

Three routes share almost £1 million allocated from the Bus Route Development Grant scheme. The scheme aims to assist councils and operators to raise the quality and frequency of local bus services.

Two Strathclyde Partnership for Transport/**Stagecoach West** routes share £790,000, to be spent on increasing frequency to 20 minutes, introducing evening and Sunday half-hourly services, lowfloor vehicles, CCTV and infrastructure improvements.

The other route to benefit, Argyll & Bute Council/**West Coast Motors** from Ardrishaig to Lochgilphead, gets £102,000 to increase frequency, provide lowfloor vehicles and extend the route to a new health centre.

Transport Minister Tavish Scott said: "In the last six years, passenger numbers on local bus services have increased by over 10%, and this new funding will see local services in Ayrshire and Argyll & Bute being developed, providing improved travel links, including to the new mid-Argyll integrated care centre."

These further projects complete the second round of the executive's BRDG scheme. The guidance for the scheme will now be revised to take account of the experience gained in the first two years of the scheme. Authorities will be invited to bid for a further round of projects later this year.

NORTH

After having cut the fat from its subsidised bus services seven months ago, **Durham County Council** is now faced with making more onerous cuts to fend off another financial crisis.

Rising fuel costs are being primarily blamed for the second round of service reductions and cuts since last November. Then, 60 routes were reviewed as the council looked to prevent a £700,000 overspend; this time another 18 are to come under scrutiny.

Cllr Bob Pendlebury, the county council's cabinet member for Transport says: "As bus operating costs continue to increase beyond inflation, the council is hit in three ways. The money we have available buys less and we have to make cuts to stay in budget. More commercial routes become unprofitable to run and the operators look to the council to provide new funding to support them. Further bus service reductions have to be made at one end of the list of subsidised services to pay for these new priorities coming in at the other." And he warns that this round of cuts may not be the last.

An overspend on bus subsidies of £175,000 was carried over from last year, added to an estimated £425,000 in increased costs and fuel bills from this year. The council says an extra £300,000 may be accrued from the time lag between identifying and implementing the cuts. The council's total subsidy budget is £3.25m this year, itself a £250,000 reduction on last year's budget. The council supports 20% of services in the county.

■ **Arriva** drivers in Teesside and County Durham have rejected the company's final pay offer made last Wednesday and will begin a series of one-day strikes on Monday July 3.

Arriva say the offer involved "incremental increases totalling 14.2%", that would deliver a wage of £8 per hour by October 2007 and which included back pay to February of this year. Iain Mclnroy, operations director of Arriva North-East, said: "We are clearly disappointed. This was our final offer, it is fair and reasonable and is well above the rate of inflation. It was also an offer which had the TGWU's full support. If we met the demands of our drivers, we would need to increase fares significantly."

The TGWU says the strikes will take place every Monday until this issue is resolved.

MIDLANDS

Spare a thought for the coach operator in the **West Midlands** whose terrible day ended up making headline news in the local newspaper.

A nursery school hired two coaches to take toddlers on a day trip to Warwickshire last week. The school says it was promised two brand-new coaches - worth £500,000 - for its £900 private hire.

The day started badly when one of the coaches broke down and the company had to supply a replacement at the last minute. Things then went rapidly downhill.

The nursery manager was quoted in the local edition of the *Express & Star* saying: "The other bus arrived late but we all got on it and made our way to the farm in Warwickshire.

"But it wasn't long before we could smell burning and that was when we got off the motorway."

"At the same time, the second bus was driving around because it had got lost. When we got back on the motorway the bus was just getting slower and slower. In the end, when we got to Spaghetti Junction we had to knock over the cones to get to the side

Travel Coventry's buses are pristine and it wants to keep them that way

Briefly

■ **Stagecoach in Manchester will spend £5,000 on increasing the police presence on its buses. Officers will ride on services, targeting high-profile routes like the 192. One 192 bus crashed into a shop front earlier this year after a passenger attacked the driver while the bus was in motion.**

■ **Stagecoach in Warwickshire says it's confused by a passenger's claim that she missed out on a job because six buses failed to turn up to take her to an interview. Job seeker Laura Kettles claims she waited two hours for a bus to take her to a final interview. She says the company gave the job to somebody else after she was late.**

Briefly

An inquest in Preston has heard the details of an accident that resulted in a young boy being killed by a bus in 2004. The father was playing football with his son and other young relatives at the Camelot Theme Park when the ball went into the road. The five-year old boy chased after it and was hit by the bus. The father told the inquest that the driver had not seen his son. Charges against the driver were dismissed by a judge later in the same year.

Four youths in Telford threw missiles at an Arriva bus in Telford last week, smashing windows and covering a mother and baby in shattered glass. The two were not injured although the mother was treated for shock

Northumberland County Council has agreed to limit travel costs for post-16s in full-time education. Students will pay no more than £360 a year. The council spends £9.5m on school transport each year, including £1m on post-16s. It says it is still contributing two-thirds of the costs. Proposals to cut faith school transport will be considered by the council next month.

Darwen bus station is set to get a major revamp as part of a £4million town centre regeneration plan. The scheme, devised by Blackburn and Darwen councillors, will see the current bus station resurfaced and a more compact, linear bus station built alongside the public square. Planning chiefs are hoping work will be complete by the end of 2007 if planning permission is granted by councillors. Officers said the aim of the scheme was "to create a high quality, vibrant and bustling market square by reducing the impact of traffic." The project will be funded by government cash and heritage grants.

and it was frightening because when we stopped we were around 40 feet up."

At this point one of the children was sick over an escort. Police helped the coach onto the hard shoulder, causing a traffic jam.

The nursery manager continues: "The driver had no credit on his phone and did not know the number for his depot, so we had to do that. Eventually the other bus we had hired came back to pick us up."

Bosses at the company apologised, offered a full refund and a free trip.

■ **Travel Coventry** is taking a hard line against passengers caught smoking onboard its services. It took two youths to court last week in addition to three others who pleaded guilty. The two youths were found guilty at Coventry Magistrates Court, fined and ordered to pay a proportion of the court costs to the company.

Stuart Henry, corporate affairs manager for Travel Coventry, says: "These two prosecutions are the latest in a long line of action we are taking against those who continue to disobey the law and the transport regulations. These latest offenders were identified smoking through our excellent CCTV systems which now give digital-clarity stills - thus enabling us to clearly identify those taking part in anti-social behaviour."

The company has also installed state-of-the-art CCTV camera systems in its travel shops in Solihull and Dudley.

LONDON

MP Andy Love says bus passengers are being neglected in a major redevelopment programme taking place in North London.

Criticising developers and **Transport for London**, Mr Love, Labour Co-Op MP for Edmonton, claimed lives are at risk while the proposed bus station in the development at Edmonton Green is delayed by wrangles between TfL and development company St Modwen.

Mr Love accused those involved of victimising passengers by delaying the completion of the bus station while the rest of the development of shops and homes progresses well.

The MP says: "People are not happy about the temporary arrangements where buses park. Residents say this is unsafe, insecure and raises the issue of children having to cross roads in order to catch the bus.

"While Transport for London, St Modwen and others wrangle over the design of the terminus, my constituents are expected to go without a bus station which should have been up and running weeks ago. First it was May, then mid June, now we're being told September."

He went on: "This is clearly not good enough. I have now written to both TfL and St Modwen stating in no uncertain terms that a meeting needs to take place as soon as possible. It looks like it's time to bang some heads together."

Project developers St Modwen say the delay is caused by a dispute with TfL over the final design of exit and entry arrangements with neither side able to reach a settlement.

A few miles away in North Finchley, TfL has ordered the closure of a recently-opened purpose-built bus station following a collision between a bus and passenger.

Roadworks

M1 Belfast
Current: Two lanes closed for roadworks both ways between J6 and J2.

M1 South Yorkshire
Until September 29: 50mph restriction both ways between J32 (M18) and J33 (A630).

M62 Greater Manchester
Current: 30mph restriction and lane closed on exit slip roads both ways at J21 (A640).

M4 Neath-Port Talbot
Current: Lane closed westbound on exit slip at J41 (A48/B3133).

A5 Conwy
Until December 31: Road closed due to roadworks near Ty-Nant and Dinmael.

M1 Hertfordshire
Until December 31, 2008: Speed restriction of 40 mph and narrow lanes both ways between J8 and J10.

M25 Waltham Abbey
Until December 31: One lane closed and 40mph speed restriction both ways between J25 (A10) and J26 (A121).

M5 Somerset
Until July 16: Speed restriction of 50mph between J25 (A358) and J26 (A38).

M4 South Gloucestershire
Until August 31: Speed restriction and narrow lanes both ways between J18 (A46) and J19 (M32).

M6 West Midlands
Until December 15: Delays on major roadworks both ways between J6 (A38) and J5 (A452).

M5 North Somerset
Until July 31: Speed restriction, one lane and hard shoulder closed both ways between J19 (A369) and J20 (B3133).

M9 spur, Kirkliston
Current: One lane closed both ways at A8000/B800 Queensferry Road.

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LEZ: capital offence

London's Low Emissions Zone is biased against coach travel,which is the real answer to fighting pollution, argues Sue Reynolds

Pollution, global warming and greenhouse gases are all part of modern life. We have seen flash flooding and drought orders and now we are threatened with London's LEZ. I recycle bottles, compost kitchen waste and am embarrassed to confess that I save over 10% of my personal fuel consumption just by setting the car's cruise control a little slower (I still need to watch for speed cameras). But now, I have to start worrying about particulates.

Concern about air quality is not new. Complaints were recorded in the 13th century when coal was first used in London. Since the middle of the 19th century, the atmosphere of the major British cities was regularly polluted by coal smoke in winter, giving rise to smog.

Typically, air pollutants are produced from power generation, industrial processes and transport. Internal combustion engines emit many types of pollutant including nitrogen oxides (NOx), volatile organic compounds (VOC), carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO_2), particulate matter (PM), sulphur dioxide (SO_2) and lead. An individual engine is not an important source of pollution; collectively however, traffic is a major source of air pollutants.

Emissions are related to use of the engine, the fuel type and the temperature of fuel combustion. If the engine is efficient, then the products of combustion will be mainly carbon dioxide and water. (Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that traps the sun's heat close to the surface of the earth). Engines are inefficient at low speeds or when idling because incomplete combustion takes place that produces carbon monoxide and VOC from petrol engines, and carbon monoxide, VOC, particulates and smoke from diesel engines. As the temperature of combustion increases, the efficiency of conversion to carbon dioxide and water increases. However, impurities in the fuel such as nitrogen are then oxidised to nitrogen dioxide.

Urban exhaust emissions declined by 51% from 1990 to 2000 mainly as a result of the reduction in emissions from petrol cars due to the phasing out of leaded petrol and the introduction of cars fitted with three-way catalysts. The tighter standards on emissions of PM from diesel vehicles introduced in the 1990s (Euro 1) have also made a major contribution to this decline. Emissions from diesel cars and vans appear to have reduced less rapidly than emissions from large diesels (HGVs, buses and coaches). This is because of the rapid growth in diesel car and van activity. Increased use has offset the benefits that have been achieved through improved technology.

Airborne particulate matter (PM) is composed of many different chemicals from many different places. Some are emitted directly into the atmosphere by combustion; others are secondary products which are formed when exhaust gases react with other chemicals in the atmosphere.

Particulates are usually classified according to their size:

- PM10: the largest size up to 10µm[1] - 25 times thinner than a human hair
- PM2.5: size up to 2.5µm - up to 100 times thinner than a human hair
- Ultrafine particulates: up to 0.1µm

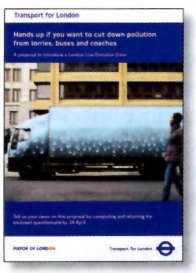
No matter the size, each of these groups is made of a range of substances, both natural and man-made.

TfL's document targets PM10 as the group of particulates responsible for major health problems. The World Health Authority recommends the development of guidelines for PM2.5 and ultrafine particulates. In the US, the Environmental Protection Agency is most concerned with the smaller particulates. Scientific papers are far more cautious than TfL when it comes to attributing blame for health problems to any particulate group. DEFRA's recent document states: "Current emission inventories do not characterise the emissions of these three PM components with sufficient accuracy for urban PM policy development purposes". DEFRA recommends further study without which "it will be difficult to say with certainty what the appropriate balance should be between controls to diesel exhaust emissions, fuels and lubricants and traffic management to meet future target air quality in any given situation".

> **The entire 'consultation process' could be described as a cynical exercise in rhetoric**

Our bodies are designed to protect us from particles in the air. Hairs and mucous in our noses and upper airways trap large particles which are expelled from the body when we sneeze or blow our noses. Very small particles are not trapped in this way, they are able to both settle in the lung walls and pass through into the bloodstream. Some of these chemicals are known to cause

With traffic problems like this, LEZ was inevitable... but has London got the formula right?



cancers. Particle size matters because we have no barrier to protect us from very small man-made particles. This does not mean that large particles are healthy, just that nature has designed a way to protect us from them. We need to be aware that low emission engines emit much smaller particles in higher concentrations. It is important to note that ultrafine particles are not a diesel-only problem. In spark ignition vehicles with well-maintained engines, operating at cruising speeds, PM emissions are very low but the particulates emitted are usually smaller. Cold start and acceleration, however, increase PM production. Worn or poorly-maintained spark ignition engines may be a major source of on-road PM. For Euro 4 and Euro 5 diesel engines we have to ask the question: how will they perform as they wear out?

Ground level ozone, the main ingredient of smog, is damaging to health, even at low levels. Ozone is produced in a chemical reaction between NOx and VOC. Evidence suggests that reductions in sulphur in diesel and running at medium/low speeds increases NOx emissions. It has been suggested that if catalyst systems are worn out or not working to maximum efficiency, increases in NOx emissions will occur.

TfL's booklet 'Hands up if you want to cut down pollution from heavy goods vehicles, buses and coaches' was supposed to be "part of the first stage of a public and stakeholder consultation". My dictionary defines consultation as a process of seeking information or advice; permission or approval. From reading TfL's letter one might be forgiven for believing that the director of Low Emission Zone, Transport for London, has already made up her mind and that this entire 'consultation process' should rather be described as a cynical exercise in rhetoric. The booklet is already biased and targets just a very small part of those that cause pollution in London. The whole exercise would have been more valid had it been entitled 'Hands up if you want to cut down pollution'.

> **Pollutants do not recognise national or local boundaries. They travel long distances**

> **Many problems could be solved if people were encouraged out of their cars and on to coaches**

Every minute a plane arrives at Heathrow, producing greenhouse gases that will remain in the atmosphere for a thousand years. Some experts predict that by the year 2050, 20% of global warming will be due to air traffic. Aircraft emissions are between two and four times more damaging to the climate than those from other industries. This is due partly to the altitude at which they are emitted and to the effects of the non-CO_2 emissions such as condensation trails and nitrogen oxides.

If London is to be pollution-free then TfL needs to ban all combustion, manufacturing, power generation, construction, demolition, the use of road salt, sand blown in from the Sahara, pollen - in fact everything. That will destroy the essence of a lively, vibrate, bustling, capital city.

Without the people and their attendant pollution, London's attractions will have to close. So do you wrap the city in cotton wool, to preserve it as an item of pristine historic interest? Remember that in so doing you kill that vital essence that is London.

The booklet justifies its arguments with the phrase "In the absence of national initiatives". Are we to understand that the British Government and even the European Parliament are not doing enough to work towards cutting pollution levels and that only TfL knows what to do?

The human race needs to be concerned about pollution, in all its forms. London has a high concentration of people and traffic, and undoubtedly these produce their own local problems, but airborne pollutants do not recognise national or local boundaries. They travel long distances. The real solutions are global.

London's current Congestion Zone covers approximately 22km^2 (this is less than 1.5% of the area covered by the Greater London boundary and the proposed Low Emission Zone). In 2005, work by Beevers and Carslow studied the changes in emissions brought about by the introduction of the Congestion Charging Scheme (CCS). This report showed changes in the total emissions of PM10 depended on vehicle type and varied between an increase of 5% for motorcycles and a decrease of 22.4% for rigid HGV's.

A very important outcome of this analysis is the effect of vehicle speed. In London, vehicle speeds are low, so the increase in speed caused by reduced congestion had a big effect on the emissions. For example, taxi flow increased by 13% in the CCS zone, but total emissions of PM10 from taxis only increased by 3.3%. Overall, the effect of increased vehicle speed within the CCS zone has reduced PM emissions.

This analysis might underestimate the benefit of the CCS in terms of the total reduction of PM emissions because no account has been taken of the potential reduction in tyre and brake wear and resuspended PM10 resulting from the reduction in vehicle flow.

Analysis comparing data before and after the introduction of the CCS (February 2003) comes closest to resembling a scientific controlled experiment. They illustrate that by reducing the number of vehicles, the rate of flow of traffic increases and this reduces the overall PM emissions. Less vehicles = less pollution. People sharing one engine to transport more passengers in a less congested environment has surely got to be the way forward.

It might be suggested that many problems could be solved if more people were to be encouraged away from their cars, to travel into London by coach, and the coaches then provided with a plentiful supply of parking facilities.

Within the EU there has been funding for the use of particle traps and low-emission engines in coaches and buses. Within London the bus fleets have been renewed at TfL's expense - possibly financed from revenues received from congestion charging. In both cases the customers have not been expected to pay for cleaner technology. Why should it be only the coach-travelling public who are expected to fund improvements in air quality for all? The cynic in me suggests that the coach passenger travelling to visit the capital, is likely to neither live in London nor votes in its mayoral elections.

In its proposals, TfL seems to be focussing on just one tree when it is the whole wood that has a problem, I am just not sure if this is by accident or by design. Are coaches just a politically-expedient target, because TfL needs to be seen to be doing something?

(1) 1µm = one millionth of a metre.

You get owt for nowt – or do you?

Northern correspondent Andy Jarosz takes to Metro's free service. He finds an operation starved of funding and warns of an opportunity wasted...

The news that the free city bus trial in Leeds is likely to be extended for another six months, has been greeted with some relief in many quarters.

Despite its overwhelming success, funding issues and political posturing have taken on a new dimension. But it will only survive in the long run if the local council and businesses are prepared to enter into a funding partnership to tackle congestion.

The service, launched at the end of January, was underpinned by a grant of £200k from West Yorkshire PTE (Metro) for the six-month trial, and will carry its 500,000th passenger this week. It links key sites across Leeds city centre, operating every four minutes from the rail station. Five Optare Solos, owned by Metro but operated by First, maintain the six-day per week service.

In Yorkshire the saying goes: "Don't do owt for nowt, and if tha does, tha does it for thaself". Hence everyone has welcomed the service... but nobody other than Metro is prepared to pay.

The plan was nearly torpedoed last year, because councillors who make up the Passenger Transport Authority come from the five districts, and those from outside Leeds vetoed the plan. They passed it only when they were given an assurance that similar schemes would be investigated for the other four districts.

PTA member Peter McBride warned that the service would not continue, however successful, if the local council did not contribute. "This plan was thrown out last year by the Tories and Liberals, because it favoured Leeds, so we agreed that every town and city could have the same deal, providing there was a partnership approach to funding. Today, everyone is claiming credit, but only Metro has coughed up money," he said.

By comparison, Greater Manchester PTE operates three free Metroshuttle services, with a lot more minibuses, seven days per week, on extended routes which reach as far as Salford station, but these are funded by a partnership which include the Transport Authority, Manchester City Council, First, Allied London Properties, NCP Manchester and the Manchester City Centre Management Company. Last year its two routes carried 1.4 million passengers after three years of operation, and this year all three are expected to carry 2.2m.

Neil Wallace from Metro has come up with some very impressive statistics, unearthed by an independent consumer research team. The highest flows (predictably) are between the bus and rail stations, 62% of users are women, 16% have self-assessed mobility problems (far higher than the 9% average for West Yorkshire bus users) and 25% have some sort of encumbrance with them when they travel. If the service did not exist, 5% of travellers would have used their car for all or part of the journey - suggesting a current reduction of 1450 car journeys per week, and 3% would not have travelled to Leeds at all, depriving the city of some economic generation.

He says that the service is carrying 29,000 people per week, and the trend is still upward, meaning that an annual target of 1.5m passengers is not unrealistic.

Livery and signing means brand recognition is good among local passengers, but better marketing is still required

What's it like?

Being within the 5% who would have used their car, I have consciously made two journeys to Leeds by train from my home in Pudsey since the service started, knowing that I would not have to walk (uphill) to my destination.

Having put £2.90 in Northern Rail's pocket, my first journey to the DVLA on Eastgate at 2.30pm took on 54 passengers including a wheelchair, before it filled up at the infirmary, and drove past three stops, leaving more intending passengers behind. My second journey, to the eye hospital, was at 8.50am, and the first 31-seater left the station with a full standing load. The second, which I just managed to get on, was also full when it left.

Metro says that the main selling points are the 17 special bus stops and the livery of the vehicles themselves, with 98% brand recognition among passengers from West Yorkshire. Nevertheless, finding a leaflet at the station was difficult, until I searched the tourist information office, and the interior of the bus itself featured no

The free service is frequent enough, but congestion in the city centre means the buses soon get bunched

publicity – just one or two cove stickers about ticket prices. No leaflets were available on the bus either, so the 7% users from outside West Yorkshire, either prepare beforehand or fly by the seat of their pants.

The service is operated by a dedicated team of senior drivers, but they face overwhelming congestion and lose time at boarding points. No traffic light priorities exist for the buses, and parking enforcement is sporadic (especially in bus lanes). Consequently, even by 10.30am, two buses had bunched, despite instructions to drivers to 'space' themselves out. Admittedly, at some junctions, giving the minibuses priority would impede other bus routes, but not at them all. Leeds has a traffic control policy of generally waving through all traffic, regardless of type, and the only priorities that exist are on special schemes like the guided busway.

> It will only survive in the long run if the local council and businesses are prepared to enter into a funding partnership

Parking enforcement isn't conducted stringently either, because its easier for wardens to nail an overstayer on a street full of parking meters, than venture off route to deter delivery lorries and cars going through bus gates.

Nor do the vehicles themselves help the service. Today's Optare Solo cannot cope on an intensive on-off city centre service. What is needed is a totally flatfloor vehicle, with two or three doorways, and a much larger capacity.

While both First and Metro commend the vehicles highly, they do not see how much dwell time is lost at stops as people struggle up the rear steps or push past standing passengers to get to the entrance where new passengers are trying to pile on.

The interior ambiance is poor. Cram 45 people into a non-air-conditioned minibus on a wet day, and you'll soon understand why. Why not extend cab air-conditioning to the whole vehicle?

The service has already been left to sell itself, perhaps because it is too successful. Apart from the bespoke bus stops, there is no other publicity on the rest of stops, and certainly no 'find-your-bus-here' guides on stops in Eastgate, when I was searching for the location of my return stop. Real-time information is not yet up and running even if you text the information line.

Metro is currently reviewing the service and may come up with new initiatives. Certainly the long journey to the bus station eastwards could be tackled, but running a service in two directions would cost more vehicles. The vast employment centres south of the river could also be tackled, at least at peak time, but will cost more money.

It's fascinating to see some parsimonious elements arguing for fares, and ignoring the savings being made by operating a free service, plus the associated cost of delays at stops and fare collection.

Where now?

Regrettably, only Metro is looking at the bigger picture, and seeing the benefits that are being generated to Leeds which is, after all, the economic engine for the whole of West Yorkshire.

The city council is happy to increase parking charges to over £2 per hour, without worrying about the economic and environmental disbenefits that increased car traffic brings.

Nobody is counting the cost to individuals and businesses of an RTA in the morning peak, which occasionally brings the centre to a standstill and can add an extra hour to each motorist's journey. Nobody is counting the benefits of safety for the pedestrians who can now make their journey by bus, or women passengers who feel safer on winter nights because the buses are fitted with CCTV.

While everybody is applauding the overnight success of the service, the parochial authorities are still reluctant to reach into their own pockets. The old Yorkshire mentality is back, and if the same thing can be replicated in my backyard, and somebody else pays for it – great, if not, well... I don't know if we can afford it!

Full marks to Metro for having the vision. It's not a new concept – it was first tried 35 years ago, but failed through a lack of vision... and plenty of parsimony, of course.

The service as it stands gets 8 out of 10. Now we need more thinking outside the box, more marketing, an even slicker product, and a determination by all to mould a successful product rather than worrying about trials.

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Minibus operator awaits fate

Public inquiry hears that a minibus firm's transport manager failed to attend a previous summons

By Roz Golds, correspondent

A family taxi firm which runs minibuses has escaped disciplinary action over the condition of its vehicles but awaits a decision on the repute of the company and its transport manager.

Traffic commissioner David Dixon said that bringing a person's reputation into disrepute was, "not a matter to ever be taken lightly", and that he would reserve his decision on Roseville Taxis and transport manager, Zia Zamir, until the end of the month.

The hearing in Birmingham was told that Roseville Taxis, a family business run by Miss Bushra Alvi, Naseem Akhtar Alvi and Ikram-Ul-Haq Alvi from Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, failed to get Mr Zamir to attend a previous public hearing.

In an inquiry called in April 2004 it was held that the reputation of Roseville's former transport manager, who was not named during the hearing, had been brought into disrepute.

Matters relating to the management of the hearing and the repute of the company were left unresolved until the hearing in Birmingham on June 16, where Miss Bushra Alvi offered to surrender the company's licence. Mr Dixon said that this was a matter he would take into consideration.

> If I find against the good repute of the company, revoking the licence would override any offer to surrender it

The other directors, Mr Naseem Akhtar Alvi and Mr Ikram-Ul-Haq Alvi, were not present.

What the traffic commissioner heard

The question of the repute of Mr Zamir centred around the question of the exact date at which he was appointed transport manager of the firm.

During the hearing, Mr Zamir admitted that he had been on the firm's license as transport manager since October, 2003. This went contrary to evidence contained in two letters shown at the hearing, including one by Mr Zamir, both stating that he took the post of transport manager on May 1, 2004.

Mr Zamir, and his legal adviser Mr John Earnshaw said the confusion arose over the wording of the matter. They said that because Mr Zamir only worked part-time for the company in October 2003 and was studying nautical engineering at college, he considered himself to be a full-time student, rather than a transport manager.

The inquiry was told Mr Zamir only considered himself to be the transport manager of the company after he increased his hours in May 2004. Miss Bushra Alvi said that the confusion had arisen because of her system of archiving paperwork.

Mr Dixon asked Mr Zamir if the company had told him his attendance was compulsory at the previous public hearing. He asked: "Was it put forcibly to you that you were required to attend or that the company would like you to attend?"

Mr Zamir replied: "I assumed it was that the company would like me to attend."

Mr Dixon was told that Mr Zamir, who has held a CPC since 1990, did not realise that his attendance at the hearing was compulsory as he had not been with the firm for very long at the time. He also heard Mr Zamir did not receive the two formal warnings sent by recorded delivery and signed by somebody from the taxi firm in Stainer Street, Newcastle.

Miss Bushra Alvi was unable to answer why she could not have contacted Mr Zamir and ask him to attend the 2004 inquiry.

The inquiry was told Mr Zamir only considered himself to be the transport manager of the company after he increased his hours

In a separate matter, the traffic commissioner held that the company should not be disciplined over the condition of its vehicles and the management of the firm.

Five vehicles were inspected by VOSPA vehicle examiner Mr Andrew Smith between April 23, 2004 and April 19, 2005.

Mr Smith, along with colleague Neil Brown, issued four inspection and two prohibition orders on five vehicles. He listed the faults as including an insecure shock absorber, a broken seat frame, broken seatbelt guides and defective brake hoses.

Left: seat belt repairs were the focus of an inspection

Mr Sajid Hashmi, an employee of Roseville Taxis, contested that the seatbelts were broken because they had been newly fitted. Mr Smith, who accepted Mr Hashmi's contention that seat belt clips can be broken very easily, replied: "One guide was fitted into the wrong place - it would have held the seat belt over the neck of the person wearing it."

The prohibition order on the vehicle with the faulty brake hoses was later revoked, as both an independent vehicle examiner, Derek Sims, who has been in the motoring trade for 52 years and Mr Smith's superior, David Drabble, later found there to be no fault with the vehicle. Mr Smith said: "I cannot offer a response why the results were different."

Mr Smith explained that it had been arranged with Mr Hashmi that he would come to view the vehicle a second time. He said: "We were going to arrange a viewing but I never got a call.

"I was told that Mr Hashmi could not be contacted by mobile telephone. David said it would be better if we just visited the company."

He told the hearing that between his two visits, improvements had been made. He said that while there was room for improvement, a system for driver defects had been established.

What the traffic commissioner said

In delivering his judgment on the condition of the company's vehicles Mr Dixon said: "The condition of vehicles and management system are not perfect but things are better than they were under the last management. There is no need to take action and revoke the licence in regard to this but I issue a formal warning that regulations must be complied with."

In regard to the issue of repute Mr Dixon said: "I reserve my judgment in regard to the repute of the company and the transport manager. If I find against the good repute of the company, revoking the licence would override any offer to surrender it. If I return that the company is in good repute then I will accept the offer to surrender the licence."

He added that he would try to get the both matters of the repute of the company and Mr Zamir dealt with as soon as possible and that both parties would be informed by post. Mr Zamir said that he has sent off the paperwork which would see his name removed from the firm's licence, and that he is currently seeking new employment.

Other Decisions

WELSH TRAFFIC AREA

Leeds, April 19 Jamfell Ltd, Swansea:

*** PSV - S14 – application granted as sought**

Swansea, May 31 David Simister T/A South Wales Limos Inc , Llanelli.

As announced by the traffic commissioner, his decision was as follows:

That maximum number of vehicles to be used at any one time is reduced to two at the licence holder's request.

One guide was fitted into the wrong place – it would have held the seat belt over the neck

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by Sue Reynolds

Digitachs or digitax?

Operator Sue Reynolds questions the operability and outcome of digital tachograph. Will it be as easy-peasy as suggested?

I don't think I'm a Luddite, I am often happy working with the latest technological advances. I have a healthy respect for computers, rely on them and know that they will break down.

It seems to me that fitters - mine and everybody else's - may be excellent with a spanner, even brilliant with an air ratchet or spray gun. However, give them a clean and tidy grey box and there is nothing doing.

Not content with electronic gear boxes, self-levelling systems and electronic climate control we now have to have digital tachographs. VOSA says that the reasons for change are to ensure that the following three objectives are supported in a robust fashion: (1) Road safety (2) Social Legislation (3) Provide a more level commercial playing field between operators.

Now that seems like a very good idea: one card that represents the driver no matter what he is (commercially) driving. So there is no risk of me sending out an exhausted driver who spent all last night doing multi-drop for another company, spent the rest day driving skip trucks, and no chance that agency drivers have worked on bus services for the last 12 days. I do not have to depend upon a driver's honesty: the card will never lie.

No more chasing around to get the tachos handed in only to have to give them back to drivers on a foreign tour, and then try to collect them again. An end to missing, damaged and "put in the wrong way around". No more sorting fragile waxed discs, and remembering not to stand a coffee mug on them.

But (and didn't I know there were going to be a lot of buts?) consider these questions:

- They are easy to get from DVLA. Is that as plausible a phrase as "dramatic reductions in fuel prices"?
- How happy will drivers be to pay £38 every five years?
- Drivers forget or mislay their cards (without it they cannot drive). And should it be genuinely lost or stolen, will this will be reported immediately so that they can run without for a maximum of 15 days then collect the replacement from the local DVLA offices... with short queues?
- While fleets contain both digital and analogue tachographs, will drivers print off and safely store the right report at the end of each session?
- Will drivers always carry a spare paper roll for the printer in the VU?
- Will drivers enjoy time off to be trained in the operation of the new equipment?
- Operators need a secure, sophisticated computer system, working at the commencement of every driver's duty, so that driver cards can be checked.
- Will we have systems in place to download data at least every 28 days? If you leave it more than 28 days the record is overwritten, the data lost and you have broken the law.
- Can operators afford time out for themselves and staff to be trained in the new machinery and systems?

Sue Reynolds is a director of Reynolds Diplomat

If you want to let off some steam, just tap away at the keyboard and send your rant (or carefully-reasoned views) to cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk, or fax 0845 280 2927. Make 'Open Platform' the subject line. Alternatively, send your missive to: CBW, 3 The Office Village, Cygnet Park, Forder Way, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8GX

- How will operators manage to collect drivers' charts within 21 days, while the driver is obliged to keep all this week's charts plus charts for a period counting back 15 days from the beginning of the current week?
- Will the driver who has left the company remember to send back his charts nearly four weeks later?

Digitachs are not required on service buses, and do not need to be used on any services operating under UK Domestic Hours Regulations, and they are not required on vehicles under 7.5 tonnes. Where's this level playing field?

This was the ideal opportunity to cut out abuse to really provide a level commercial playing field between operators. All that has happened is the good operators will have to pay the very high price, though these were not the people that VOSA needed to worry about in the first place.

There can be no doubt that digital tachographs will make it much easier for VOSA to beat you up, not just on drivers' hours but because there are so many more burning hoops we have to jump through.

I don't see it as digitachs... more a digi-TAX on good coach operators, AGAIN! Don't even ask what's in store for 2008.

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- Bus Subsidies - the subsidy system is in crisis...
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What's flexible about yellow buses?

School contracts are still bread and butter to us. Unfortunately, local authorities still go for first-past-the-post when awarding school contracts. You may be interested in a letter I penned recently to the Confederation of Passenger Transport:

"I read with interest the article 'All go for CPT school bus committee' in CBW *last week.*

It's okay for First Student to crack a whip about dedicated yellow school buses, but what about us rural operators, who use second-owner rolling stock, ie ex-touring type coaches which we use for a variety of work (I think its known as being flexible) other than schools?

The rural operator is a very important part of the economy, not only in operating the school run, but also weekend excursions, etc.

If we all buy yellow dedicated buses the used coach market will no doubt collapse overnight!

There has to be a balance on this issue."

James Bevan, James Bevan of Lydney, CPT member, coach and bus operator, and district councillor, Gloucestershire

Time to address entitlement

Reading your article (*CBW* June 14) regarding the threat in some parts of the country to free transport to faith schools, prompts me to voice thoughts I have had for a long time.

Surely, it is well past the time when the government should bite the bullet and scrap free home to school transport for all children based on distance from school, except those in low-income families.

Free distance-based travel provides subsidy to families, the majority of whom are among the more affluent, who are able to choose to live in less densely-populated districts, which tend to be more distant from public facilities like schools. It offers no help to less affluent families, living closer to the centre of our towns and cities.

The current arrangements should be replaced by an obligation to ensure suitable transport is available to all children living over 2 km or 3 km, with authorities entitled to charge up to 50% of the cost of provision. Only low-income families would be exempt from charges but, authorities should retain the discretion to charge less than 50%.

Among other things, this will help to prepare us for the promised new world in which parents will have a right to choice between three secondary schools. This is likely to lead to the need to provide more extensive home to school transport networks, with the likelihood of increased cost which the public sector will find difficult to meet. There is also the possibility that the change might raise some additional funding to assist with raising standards in the quality of transport provided.

Imagine a public consultation exercise which says to parents something along the lines of: "You can have the minimum standard currently provided at £2 a day per pupil. For a service with improvements x, y, and z, you will have to pay £3. Which do you prefer?"

Terry Walker, public transport planner, City of York Council

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Your article 'The Cost of Regulation' (*CBW* June 7) was an excellent summary of the options now facing both the government and the industry. The case for re-regulation is being championed in the press and at the door of government ever more loudly, but noise often gets in the way of informed debate and decisions.

One of the underlying themes from the re-regulation lobby is that an increasing proportion of the industry's income is derived from the state, and that as a result the state should have more say in where and when bus routes are run, and at what price to the consumer. Of course more is being paid by the state, but that is because the state decides, for social but certainly not transport policy reasons, to increasingly offer our core markets free or reduced price travel and to reimburse operators instead.

It is as cynical as it is perverse for those payments to be included in the sum really paid by the state. In the same way sums paid for extra local bus services which it decides, sometimes for blatant political reasons rather than social or transport ones, to secure from operators should not be included. Let us by all means engage in debate now, but let us not skew the figures to deliberately present inaccurate support for the case either side wants to make.

I may add that two points were missing from your article. First, the cost of operation is rising fast. If that is putting funding under pressure, as it manifestly is, then it is pertinent to deal with the cause of that inflationary pressure. Government, and very especially the EU, has a lot to answer for in this respect.

Also, there was no mention of the price to the consumer. Local authorities want control mainly so they can cross-subsidise infrequent travellers (probably for whom the bus is provided as a result of political say-so rather than real demand) by frequent users.

Against this background, are we really to believe that local authorities would provide the best base for price moderation? Of course not: price control in the hands of a local authority would be a guarantee of upward pressure on prices.

Along with all the positives, that is the unmistakable conclusion from the level of fares charged in London.

Ben Colson, Norfolk Green

WIN A BUS! Sort of... Drop us a line and if your letter is chosen as our Letter of the Week, you'll receive a top-notch coach or bus model courtesy of our friends at Corgi. Please try to keep your letters under 200 words. The editor's decision is final.

***CBW* is the only paid-for weekly news magazine for the coach and bus industry. Each week the magazine provides a unique insight. Your views are always welcome. Write to the editor at the above address**

Designed for the future

The East Lancs NeoMAN single-deck making its way through the production process at Blackburn will offer a valuable option to the AdBlue route to Euro 4

It won't be launched until November, but East Lancs and NeoMAN UK has given us a glimpse into the design work that has led to the new single-deck.

As yet unnamed, the new bus is the second design to emerge from East Lancs' new design department using state-of-the-art 3D Computer-Aided Drawing (CAD) to fully model a vehicle from the ground up.

The new bus, though sharing the mid-section with the new Esteem, called for a new front and rear section to give the bus a unique look. It's based on MAN's Lion City A69/18.240 chassis with Euro 4, EGR engine and the latest electronic systems to manage the bus's functions.

The single-deck will eventually be joined by a double-deck built on MAN's A48 chassis, again with unique styling. The prototype is currently in Germany undergoing typically German, stringent testing.

East Lancs has set about its task using the Alco Alusuisse bolted aluminium system. This build structure uses a variety of aluminium extrusions, with strong cant rails and unique bolting systems which ensure consistent geometry, great strength and can aid fast repair of accident damage.

Ensuring that the vehicle will be on the road for as much of its working life as possible is almost an obsession with East Lancs. All serviceable areas of the chassis have suitable access panels, the rear engine door being a case in point. Feedback from operators facing a squeeze for space in workshops was that they didn't want a simple flap engine door. East Lancs designed a cantilever door which requires much less space to open.

Despite every operator's desire for simplicity in bus design, there's equal pressure placed on design from legislation and the practical needs of the public. East Lancs has reacted to those pressures by planning a range of options for the bus.

There will always be operators who prefer gasket glazing; easier to replace glass, but a system which adds nothing to the structural strength. Bonded glazing stiffens the body and is cosmetically much more attractive. East Lancs offers both.... and the surprising option of double-glazing.

Above: It's got the MAN and East Lancs logos, but the name is down to *CBW* readers

High-profile services are increasingly specify air conditioning and double glazing helps get the full benefit. To prevent vandalism, CCTV has become an essential, and East Lancs has designed it into the interior and, for good measure, can provide external cameras to help reduce spurious accident claims and analyse incidents.

LED lighting offers two major advantages over bulbs. The units are much less prone to vibration, which can significantly reduce the life of incandescent lighting. Virtually vandal-proof, LED clusters also have very low power consumption.

Building bespoke buses is East Lancs' strength

The first order for nine single-decks has come from Stagecoach, which will be going into a partnership project route from Ayr to Stranraer.

The 43-seaters have been specified for the route by both Stagecoach and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, and this, says East Lancs sales director John Horn, is the strength of East Lancs.

"We have a 'standard' specification when we design our vehicles but I don't think we've supplied a standard bus yet. Obviously the suppliers we deal with regularly provide a service we like, but the eventual choice is entirely down to the operator."

East Lancs has worked with LOOK and others on closed circuit TV; Infocell and Actia among GPS suppliers; Clayton and Carrier Sutrak among air conditioning suppliers; and seating has come from Esteban, Fainsa, Scandus and Lazzerini.

"But we are flexible; we don't build for stock so the operator gets what he wants. With so many routes, like Stagecoach's, which are driven by partner projects aiming at varying levels of quality, this has proven essential," said Mr Horn.

Name that bus!

NeoMAN and East Lancs are offering *CBW* readers the chance to put a name on the new single-decker. And get a free lunch... in Germany

Councillors love it, politicians crave it, and astronomers do it for a pastime. Have you ever wanted to choose the name of something new? We can't offer you a street, building or comet, but we can give you free rein to choose the name of the all-new MAN single-deck now in design at East Lancashire Coachbuilders.

The Euro IV vehicle is the last word in modern bus design, offering the sophistication of MAN's world-beating chassis plus the kind of cutting edge bodywork and styling for which ELC is famous.

It's not the first time an ELC vehicle has been named by a *CBW* reader. In 1999 the all-new Pyoneer double decker was christened by Anne Clarke who at the time was the financial director for Eastbourne Buses.

This time, the object of your desire is a 43-seat, Alcan Alusuisse aluminium-framed beauty with the award winner looks of the MAN Lion City and the much acclaimed interior design of East Lancs recently launched Esteem. This vehicle is already at the prototype stage.

What name should it get? Well, it's up to you, but here are a few pointers. There's a tradition at ELC of substituting a letter 'y' for an 'i' - Myllennium, Flyte, and so on. You could take this lead, or choose a completely new reason for your name. Maybe you'd like to hark back to a seminal model of bus from the past, or appeal directly to the passenger with a name that spells comfort and quality.

It is important that you don't choose a name already in use for a car, van or – obviously – an existing or past model of bus. There may be no problem if your name is shared by a coffee grinder or brand of sportswear, for example. To be on the safe side, choose something truly original.

Send your entries by letter, fax or email by August 2 to be in with a chance of winning a great weekend and getting your choice of name on the next generation of citybus.

The prize

Not only will your choice of name go through to the final selection process, but NeoMAN will invite you out to Germany for two exciting days.

Your break will start on September 21 with a trip to the IAA exhibition in Hanover where you'll be able to see mainland European developments first-hand at one of the biggest PCV shows in Europe.

After an overnight stay with dinner at the Bussing Museum, you'll be whisked off to the Salzgitter bus production plant to see NeoMAN at close range before flying home.

The Judges

The judges for the competition will be: Vince Welsh, MD of NeoMAN Bus UK; John Horn, sales director of East Lancs Coachbuilders; Mark Williams, editor of *CBW*; and Brian Nimick, director general of the Confederation of Passenger Transport.

The judges' decision, to be reached on August 3, will be final, and the prizes are non-negotiable.

The competition closes on August 2, 2006 and is not open to employees and relatives of East Lancashire Coachbuilders, Rouncy Media or NeoMAN. After this date, the winning entry will be decided by a panel including representatives of ELC, NeoMAN and CBW. The judges' decision will be final.

Name that bus! competition

Full name _____

Position _____

Address _____

_____

Email address _____

The new East Lancs MAN single-deck should be called the

_____

Send to: Name That Bus, c/o Vince Welsh, NeoMAN Bus UK, Clearwater House, Frankland Road, Blagrove, Swindon SN3 8YP, fax 01793 448359, or via email to vwelsh@neoman.co.uk

SCANIA

Scania unveils its Euro 4 range

With latest emissions rules rapidly approaching, all manufacturers are gearing up for some big changes. Martin Cole travelled to Sweden to see Scania's offerings...

The introduction to Euro 4 emissions-compliant engines has seen change on a scale rarely seen before. Manufacturers have used the implementation date (October 2006) to make significant changes and all are introducing updated, re-styled, or completely new offerings.

Scania has just revealed its comprehensive new range of coach and bus models which start becoming available later this year. The various chassis remain largely the same but they all feature new multiplexed electronics, revised brakes, some new transmission options and a set of new engines with increased power ratings.

Topping the coach range is a new 470bhp, 12-litre engine, developing 2,200Nm torque, coupled to a new version of Scania's Opticruise gearbox with 12 speeds and an integral Scania retarder. This will be available in the Irizar PB and those still keen on the long-serving Irizar Century will have power options up to 420bhp. These chassis will, of course, be available to other bodybuilders.

All power options come from a choice of two engines. The five-cylinder, 9-litre unit is available in 230, 270 and 310bhp versions and the 12-litre, six-cylinder engine comes with ratings of 340, 380, 420 and 470bhp.

Both the 420 and 470bhp units are allied with Opticruise gearboxes only, but the 380bhp version can be selected with Scania's eight-speed Comfort-Shift manual gearbox. Comfort-Shift is also made available on the 340bhp unit or this can be supplied with new, fuel-efficient ZF five or six-speed automatic gearboxes. All 9-litre engines have the full range choice of Opticruise, Comfort-Shift or ZF gearboxes.

Each of the engines in the coach and bus range uses the exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) technique for achieving low emissions and this means they run on straight diesel fuel with no need to introduce an additive into the combustion cycle. As a result, there are no additional tanks on the vehicles. The larger two engines use compound turbocharging.

Chassis classification remains very similar to the previous coach or bus designations with all longitudinal engine installations under the K-Series title and all transverse engine layouts labelled N-Series.

Modular design principles ensure commonality and improve synergy within the manufacturing base and a large proportion of the componentry is shared with the truck range. All lowfloor bus front sections are identical and share a rigid front axle and two-spring air suspension with R-Series trucks. N-Series citybuses with lowfloor throughout and including the double decker and articulated buses feature the 9-litre, five-cylinder engine and only automatic gearboxes are fitted - a five or six-speed ZF with a primary retarder and Neutral Bus Stop function.

Drive and tag axles are also common to the truck range. The trailed tag axle is hydraulically steered at low speed to aid manoeuvrability. The steering angle is determined via a proportional hydraulic link which is determined by the lock on the front axle. Customers can also choose between two levels of sound encapsulation - either 77 or 80 dBA.

K-Series chassis, for bus or coach also have two or three-axle capability with typical lengths ranging from 12 to 13.5m or 13.7 to 15m respectively. These chassis accept all engines and transmission options and low or normal floor heights in the centre section. They can be fitted with lowfloor front modules for easy access and maintain a normal-height centre section which allows provision for luggage capacity in underfloor lockers for intercity operation. Coach versions of the K-Series also have the option of independent front suspension which allows a lowfloor front section to be employed for double deck coaches.

These chassis also feature an ESP electronic stability programme which will become available as an option in the near future. Upgraded electronics based on the CAN-Bus system has led to reduced wiring with increased functions and greater reliability. It allows new levels of system integration and the capability to accept new developments.

Electronic braking (EBS) becomes standard on all models and includes ABS antilock functions, traction control, pad-wear sensors and automatic pad-wear compensation - which adapts braking to make pads wear evenly on all wheels. Scania says low-speed braking has been improved by around 20% along with a substantial improvement in sensitivity.

Top left: OmniCity double decker boasts strong parts commonality. Top right: Flagship Irizar PB-bodied 470bhp 6x2*4. Above: Euro 4 PB driver's area is elegant and exceptionally comfortable

Brake blending is an integrated part of the EBS system and comes into play when the brake pedal is applied. The pedal action immediately calls on the integrated retarder system, which is now far more responsive and faster in actuation, but still not immediate - so the foundation brakes are actually brought into play first. These provide immediate response to demand but the braking action is transferred to the retarder as it begins to function and is released completely as the retarder becomes fully engaged.

EBS also has provision for a hill-hold facility which will momentarily retain brake system pressure to prevent a stationary vehicle rolling when on an uphill or downhill gradient. The brakes remain applied until the clutch is engaged and the vehicle attempts to move.

Brake Assist is designed to aid drivers when applying the brakes in either a panic or emergency situation. It senses abrupt braking and will support the driver by applying greater braking effort and maximising the stopping power available.

Temperature monitoring of the disc brakes also allows the system to warn the driver of impending brake fade. Although this is an unlikely requirement under normal braking operations, it will have uses should excessive heat build up due to incorrect use or a unit defect. It will warn the driver of potential fade via a warning on the trip-computer display.

A new capability allows axle weights to be read individually in the instrument cluster. Furthermore, tri-axle chassis have the ability to transfer weight from the tag axle to the drive axle in order to increase traction in slippery conditions. This function can be implemented manually via switch or automatically by linking it with the traction control. The system only functions at speeds up to 30km/h.

'Drivers in Focus'

Scania has done a lot of development work under the 'Driver in Focus' tag and this centres around making the driving environment as comfortable, ergonomic and as stress-free as possible. All the new models feature the latest developments and many of the changes have already been implemented and proven in the truck range.

Driver comfort is arranged around the obvious things such as seat adjustment, steering column position adjustment and layout of controls and instrumentation, but there are other areas, less obvious, that can have a significant influence on driver stress.

Foot pedal positioning and operation is a major factor which has been addressed and starts with all the pedals being pendant mounted and pivoted above the foot. Below the pivot point comes a further quadratic parallelogram pivot which provides an accelerator pedal action virtually identical to that found in modern cars. Pedal positioning is also catered for and the driver's right foot can transfer from the accelerator to the brake just by moving the ball of the foot to the left.

The brake pedal action is also designed to require less force to implement more braking power. Research showed

SCANIA

that traditional brake pedal operation used muscles along the front of the leg, and to exert strong pressure in an emergency situation led the driver to pull on the underside of the steering wheel, lift out of the seat, and literally stand on the brake.

The new developments mean the extra force required at the pedal, through its revised action, transfer the muscle requirements to the thigh muscles, which are far stronger, so it is easier and far less stressful to apply the brakes heavily.

Scania's head of research and development, Hasse Johansson, commented: "Drivers who enjoy their working environment are very likely to do a good job. They will drive more safely, use less fuel and cause less wear and tear. So the welcome side-effects of improved ergonomics are reduced environmental load and greater vehicle uptime."

Test drives

With around 14 different vehicles to choose from, Scania's test-drive session allowed limited time for a full evaluation, but a brief run in all the Euro 4 range was sufficient to highlight a number of benefits.

The range-topping 470bhp K-Series on a 6x2*4 chassis with Irizar PB 14m body proved seriously impressive. Equipped with a new 12-speed Opticruise automated transmission it proved almost effortless to drive and it swallowed up all the inclines and gradients the test course could throw at it without a single murmur.

Apart from hearing the engine start, you really don't hear it again because any noise, such as it is, is drowned out by the air-conditioning blower. Occasionally you can hear some rear axle whine as the transmission changes down and there is a similar audible whine when the retarder engages.

The whole package feels extremely refined. It steers impeccably, soaks up bumps without transferring shocks through the body and it feels rock-solid on the road.

The steering is car-like. At cruising speeds there's no need to be constantly correcting to keep it in a straight line - it's totally relaxed. The feedback through the steering wheel is very good despite it being very light to turn.

A fast-engaging retarder is a real boon, and the new models are much improved as a result. The stalk on the right of the steering column doubles as the auto/manual selector for the Opticruise system and for the retarder staging. Two clicks are sufficient to put a steadying check on any over-run and progressive activation exerts a significant braking force which leaves little need to employ the brake pedal under many braking applications.

Clockwise from above: high-capacity OmniLink 18m artic urban transport; centre switch calls in the retarder to maintain a set speed downhill; Euro 4 mutiplexed CAN-bus wiring greatly simplifies on-board electrics; complex articulation of pedals reduces driver stress; multi-function switch for gear mode selection and retarder functions

However, the brake pedal is linked directly to the retarder and makes use of it automatically. The difference is that pressing the brake pedal gives an instant response because it pulls the foundation brakes in first. As the retarder engages fully the foundation brakes are released and the retarder function takes over.

This operation is governed by the brake pedal position, so if the system determines the driver is continuing to add pressure, it will use both foundation and retarder to slow the vehicle dramatically. If it senses the driver is only feathering the brake, it will allow the retarder to control braking.

Additionally, there is a retarder function on the steering wheel - which has three inset controls. The centre button brings in the retarder but will allow the vehicle to maintain the speed at which it was travelling. So, if the driver was travelling at 40mph and the road suddenly went downhill, pressing the button maintains the speed but automatically implements the amount of retardation to keep the speed constant. It can be switched off with another single push or over-ridden by pressing the brake pedal.

The 470bhp engine develops 2,200 Nm torque and it pulls like a train - indicating the need for fewer gear changes throughout a journey and potential for fuel savings.

EURO4 ENGINE RANGE

Engine	CC lt	Power bhp/kW	Torque Nm
DC9 16 230	8.9	230/169	1,050
DC9 17 270	8.9	270/198	1,259
DC9 18 310	8.9	310/228	1,550
DC12 10 340	11.7	340/250	1,700
DC12 13 380	11.7	380/280	1,900
DT12 12 420	11.7	420/309	2,100
DT12 03 470	11.7	470/345	2,200

DC9 = EGR charge cooled five-cylinder unit with PDE injection.
DC12 = EGR charge cooled six-cylinder unit with HPi injection.
DT12 = EGR charge cooled six-cylinder unit with HPi injection and turbocompound.

Changing vehicles to the 13.7m 6x2*4 Irizar Century with a 420bhp engine and Opticruise gearbox was a very similar experience. It didn't seem to suffer very much from having 50bhp less, but without a load on, one wouldn't expect it to. Both coaches were extremely pleasant to drive and it would be difficult to choose between them on any sort of preference other than the body style. In service, with a full load aboard, is where the additional power of the 470bhp engine is likely to show an advantage.

Bus offerings in the demonstration line-up included an 18m articulated OmniLink - a low-entry/exit vehicle with raised floor area in the rear section for longer suburban routes where passengers spend more time on the vehicle.

Equipped with a ZF automatic gearbox it proved to be as smooth and almost as manoeuvrable as its single deck counterparts - except when reversing.

The cab area, being so far from the engine, is obviously very quiet but internal noise levels in the rear section proved quite acceptable. Scania claim 77 or 80 dBA depending on the level of encapsulation specified.

Like their coach counterparts, the buses steer very positively and ride comfortably. The articulated model presents no particular problem under normal driving as the rear section tracks the front quite accurately.

The extra weight places more demand on the engines but the larger 270 and 310bhp engines have sufficient capability to deal with most requirements. The smaller 240bhp engine seems adequate for operation in areas without too much steep terrain. Running around on level ground it performs very well.

The Euro 4 buses on display all featured Scania's own aluminium Omni bodies but the chassis are available for bodying elsewhere. Scania says it is seeing a growth in demand for the Omni product and interest in total in-house products is increasing.

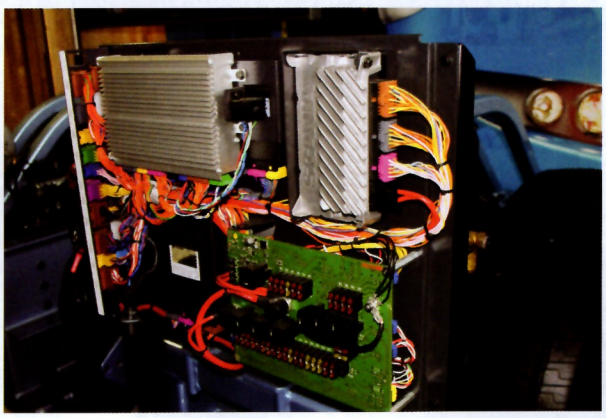
Geoff Bell, MD of Scania Bus & Coach said: "Since the re-integration of Scania Bus & Coach with Scania GB we are developing new initiatives in back-up and support.

"We have a very large and capable network of service dealers and they are capable of providing strategic support for buses or coaches. We've already seen the designated key centres operate with some success and the next step is to extend the capabilities further.

"We are also aiming to introduce a new support package for customers which we call '2+2'. Basically, this is a deal where we provide two years repair and two years maintenance as an alternative to doing extended warranties. It's something the truck side started doing and it has gone down very well. Operators have the peace of mind that comes from having their vehicles looked after by Scania specialists and it provides welcome work for the aftercare network - because, quite frankly, the vehicles have become so much more reliable we have seen a decline in demand."

Having enjoyed some considerable success in world markets, culminating in a record year in 2005, Scania is aiming to grow its market share further and has pinned much faith in the new range of Euro 4 vehicles and their associated technology. Senior vice-president, Hans Hansson, said the company had undergone some very painful changes over the past few years in order to restructure the business, but the results were now showing and Scania would be striving to achieve 10,000 sales per annum in the near future.

He added: "2005 was a good year but we are aiming to grow well beyond this. We have new products and a range of new services to support them. The bus programme has provided a versatile and diverse range from city buses to touring coaches and with options on diesel, ethanol or gas as fuel.



"We are seeing a continued trend towards deregulation of transport services across Europe, in the former Eastern Bloc, Asia and India, which means there are many more smaller operators to cater for alongside the emergence of large multi-national operating groups.

"All these potential customers have greater freedom of choice when it comes to purchasing - hence new initiatives we are developing in financing our products."

TEST CENTRE

The visit to Scania was concluded with a tour of the laboratory and testing facility at Sodertalje. This extensive site is currently undergoing some redevelopment with around half the engine test cells being replaced by new ones. Visitors were allowed to see into contained Euro 5 specification engines. In one, an existing Euro 4 EGR engine with HPi injection was being evaluated at Euro 5 levels achieved by fitting a particulate filter to the exhaust. This unit will be available shortly for anyone wanting a Euro 5 ahead of 2009.

In another cell was a 9-litre Euro 5 engine featuring the common-rail XPi injection system Scania jointly developed with Cummins. This will be the mainstream Euro 5 engine in 2009.

There were also facilities for accelerated testing of suspension and chassis components and destruction testing of engine and driveline parts - all of which are subjected to extreme stresses - to ensure they will deliver longevity in service.

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Living with EU's new hours

Despite the long timescale, Europe reached the wrong conclusion with new drivers' hours. *CBW* assesses the impact of the 45-hour weekly rest

The ripples of dissent which spread through the coach industry last December, when Europe announced the 45-hour fortnightly rest, are now assuming tsunami proportions.

As the first operators begin itinerising their summer 2007 brochures, the practical problems posed by having to build in a two-day break without the benefit of the 12-day rule are becoming apparent, and operators here in the UK and across Europe are now discovering the requirement is a catastrophe for the coach tour industry.

Announced by the European Commission after a closed session, the 45-hour break - due to go on the statute book next April - and the ending of the 12-day rule was devised to protect truck drivers from excessive working patterns, but snared all heavy vehicles.

"If you've got an Albanian lorry driver hired to take tomatoes from southern Spain to northern Finland, you can see the point. This was drafted for drivers carrying things, not people," said a spokesman for the Confederation of Passenger Transport, which pushed national Government and Europe to take this factor into account.

It was, however, as if the European Commission's socialists ran out of patience or were stubbornly refusing to acknowledge PCVs as a separate issue. In the early hours of December 7, 2005, an EC conciliation committee dropped the bombshell.

"The changes to driving time and rest show what can go wrong when ›

New rules were drafted for truck drivers but snared coach drivers too

decisions are taken at a high level with no evidence of problems with existing rules. The practical effect will be drivers unable to work when they are needed, new stresses and strains for proprietors and managers, and an industry less able to offer attractive, reliable services to the public," said the CPT at the time.

Nor was it just the CPT. The International Road Transport Union - IRU - said: "The conciliation agreement is a disaster for long-distance European coach tourism. Many European coach tours - offered typically to North American or Asian tourists - will be lost, with a negative knock-on effect for European tourism."

The IRU even assessed the cost: "With this decision for the coach industry, a €500 million business has been killed overnight," said IRU EU delegate Hubert Linssen. "The EU institutions will now have to take full responsibility for the loss of industry competitiveness and jobs, reduced tourism, disruption to the internal market, and the overall economic damage that will inevitably follow from their decisions."

The strength of feeling was perhaps summed up best by the CPT in a comment it made in its *Newsline* publication: "The passenger sector across Europe is pretty sore that useful and safe flexibilities, such as the 12-day rule, have been sacrificed for simplified enforcement.

"Who wants to spend a couple of days away from home because they have run out of hours on the way back from somewhere, and cannot even hop on a train without breaking the law?

"Perhaps we should be grateful that some of the more extreme proposals were not pursued."

At a meeting of the IRU two weeks ago, the final conclusion was that the chances of getting any change are minimal, with the European process taking so long delegates to the meeting were told that, even if the principle for change was established, getting it to statute would take seven years.

"After seven years, it will be established practise, and we'll be used to it," said MD of Heyfordian Graham Smith, one of the IRU members. "I'm not sure we'll want to change all over again."

The practicalities

One of the UK's biggest coach tour operators, Alfa Travel of Chorley, says the end result of the drivers' hours changes will be more expensive, less attractive holidays.

MD Paul Sawbridge and head of operations Neil McMurdy have already begun working on itineraries for the 2,500 departures in summer 2007 and say the victim will be on-tour excursions, vital to bring added value.

Alfa runs from four catchment areas to its 16 hotels; the north-east, with an interchange at Bowburn Services; the north-west which includes west and south Yorkshire, north Wales and the Potteries, using Sandbach services as an interchange; south-east which takes in Suffolk south through London and a swept arc to Bournemouth with the interchange at Reading; and midlands with an interchange at Tamworth.

Alfa Travel, like many operators, favours a one-driver, one-vehicle, one-tour regime to help deliver consistency. This involves a fair amount of back-to-back working patterns.

But the reality is that Alfa - like many coach tour operators - has no problem with driving hours. On average, one of Alfa's drivers does 28 driving hours per week, and never more than 40 hours.

Using the new rules with seven-day, weekend departures results in the end of two separate days taken as the weekly break. At present, drivers typically rest Monday and Friday - the day after arrival and the day before departure. This has evolved, says Mr McMurdy, because those days suit holidaymakers.

Remote island communities will now lose some coach tourism, says WA-Shearings

WHAT THE RULES WILL BE

From April 11, 2007, the new drivers hours rules will begin:

Driving time
- Standard daily maximum driving time nine hours
- Ten hours permissible twice a week
- 56-hour limit per fixed week
- 90-hour limit for two consecutive weeks

Breaks
- 45 minutes after 4½ hours of driving, or...
- ...15 minutes break followed by 30 minutes
- No breaks to be taken on a moving vehicle

Daily rest
- 11 hours regular daily rest
- Nine hours reduced daily rest, three times between weekly rest, no compensation required
- Three hours followed by nine hours split daily rest, the three-hour period first

Spreadover
- 13 hours standard spreadover, but...
- ...15 hours more than three times between weekly rests if additional days include a three-hour-plus rest period
- 21 hours spreadover for multi-manned operations

Weekly rest
- 45 hours' rest in any two consecutive weeks and...
- ...at least one other weekly rest of 24 hours with...
- ...compensation for reduced weekly rest en bloc attached to another rest period of at least nine hours, taken before the third week following the week in which the reduced rest is taken
- A maximum 144 hours can elapse between the end of one weekly rest period and the start of the next

(Our grateful thanks to CPT for the information in this summary)

"The first day is the day after arrival when passengers are tired from the journey, and the Friday so they can get last-minute shopping done and pack. That won't be possible next year - the two days will have to be taken in the middle of the itinerary."

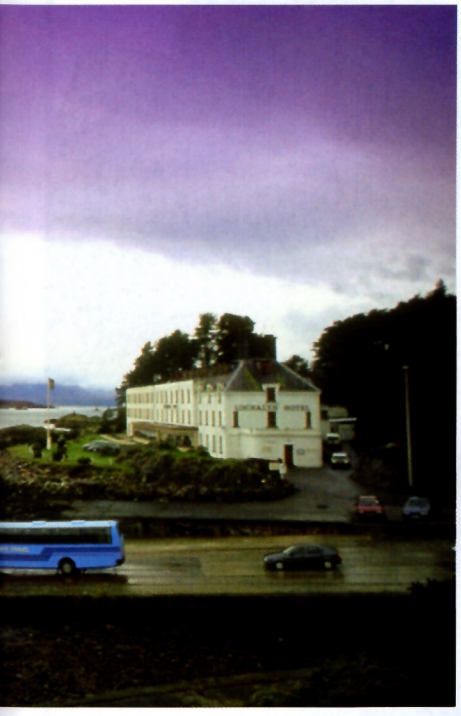
Alfa has a limited number of types of domestic tour: eight-day Saturday to Saturday, eight-day Sunday to Sunday, seven-day Sunday departure, five-day Monday to Friday, or five-day Wednesday to Sunday, or five-day Saturday to Wednesday.

To sort out the complexity, Alfa has given its departures three classifications - A, B or C - with A tours ONLY operated interleaved with Bs, Bs can be run independently, and C are standalone long continentals (see diagram, right).

In Alfa's case, the ideal time for the 45-hour break is midweek, centred on Wednesday to avoid problems with tours a driver will be driving in ensuing weeks: "So long as Wednesday remains the key day off you'll never work more than six days before the next routine," says McMurdy. The options then open are starting the 45 hours Tuesday morning, Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning.

"That way you can stitch one tour to another without a problem. But the passenger will have to go on an excursion the day after arrival, and the same at the end, on a day when they'd rather it was less organised.

"Some of the half-days will have to be run on mornings. We generally run half-days in the afternoons. Let's say it's a Saturday to Saturday, typically now you get a full day on Monday, and two half days on Tuesday and Thursday, so they get Sunday, Wednesday and Friday off.

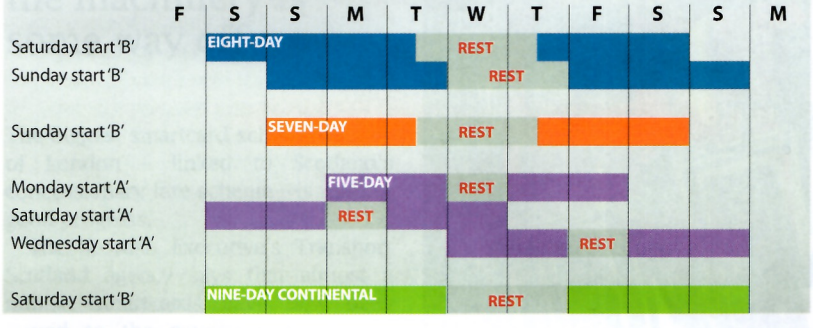


manoeuvring drivers hours around extended continental tours: "The 12-dayers running Monday to Friday have three days getting to resort, so we can't use Wednesday. They will have to take a Saturday/Sunday break when they get back, and a day off at the resort.

"The classic continental touring pattern which we use is Monday for 12 days followed by Saturday for nine days, then Monday for 12, etc. That's not possible any more because the drivers are going to have to have their weekends off. Our 12 days are resort-and-stay with no touring itinerary, and seven days at resort.

"The likelihood is that our drivers will have to do continental every other week, or two weeks out of three, which will not please them. Those that do

ALFA'S DRIVING PATTERNS



"To make the break, the Tuesday half-day becomes a morning excursion instead of an afternoon, so we get from Tuesday lunchtime to Thursday lunchtime to take the weekly rest."

Sawbridge says he hasn't even begun to assess the problems it will cause for attractions which, for example aren't open Monday, or market days which are some of his customers' favourite excursions. One popular river cruise depends on the tide, and if high tide is in a 'rest' half of the day, can't be run.

Alfa's working practice complicates matters by allowing drivers to run their own optional half-day on each tour: "Most of them choose to do a theatre after the half-day excursion. Very often they are on a Tuesday, and that won't be possible, and most theatres are closed on Mondays. So they'd have to persuade their customers to take a theatre trip after a full-day excursion."

Sawbridge and McMurdy believe this will lead to some more creative half-day excursions which won't interfere with the legal break. "There will be ways round it, depending on how the drivers handle it," says McMurdy.

The biggest problem will be continental work prefer to stay on it."

Sawbridge says the dedicated continental driver may now be faced with taking weekly rest abroad.

"They may end up taking their break in Brussels while someone else shuttles their vehicle home and back to them," he says.

"The weekly rest rule may not suit holidaymakers or some drivers, but it will be harder for some private hire operators. What if you have football on a Saturday and suddenly there's a replay on Tuesday, when all his drivers are due to take their 45 hours?

"Another problem is that we don't know how the third-party operators are going to stage their days off, and they may end up with a driver who needs a Monday and Tuesday off.

"Operators are being asked to quote now for tour companies without seeing the itinerary. They could end up with an itinerary which they can't work."

We were ignored, says Scholes

WA-Shearings' Alan Scholes says lobbying the EU over a period of years had no effect, to the dismay of operators across Europe.

"Somebody listened to us, but the problem was, the rest took no notice," said Scholes, who was involved in the process from the start. "Those backing us were simply outnumbered by other political factions.

"As an industry, we are insignificant. We are not understood, nor is anyone interested."

Scholes said the knock-on effect will hit some rural communities very hard.

"Places that will suffer will be remote tourism regions. We have just given back the contracts for Scottish Islands," he says.

"Without an excursion, there is nothing for our customers to do on somewhere like Barra. In some places, we'll be able to hire in during the drivers' rest days, but the fact is we'll only be able to do something for resort-based holidays. Many touring holidays will be wrecked."

Scholes says the industry put in proposals for separate driver hours regulations for PCV to recognise that coaches carry people, not goods, but in its zeal to 'simplify' enforcement, Europe actually turned down simpler rules in favour of complex but unified HGV/PCV hours.

"We haven't begun to work out the full effect of this. It will lead to a shortfall in availability of coaches. I dread to think how we will cope when the Olympics come in 2012."

Left: Alfa has devised a range of A, B and C-classified patterns to accommodate the weekly rest. MD Paul Sawbridge (below) says it's the safest solution

Neil McMurdy: "Drivers will have to be inventive with excursions"

The tour operator's view

Tony Laver, managing director of Laver Holidays in Loughborough, says the reduced length of the average coach tour may be a saving grace.

"Because we are 99.9% UK tour orientated, we do not envisage any major problems with the new regulations," he says. "As I understand it, our coach suppliers will need to review our longer tour itineraries - seven, eight and nine days - and possibly compensate with extra rest periods on their return, but these are few and far between nowadays.

"Most tours are four to six days in duration and, other than the effect the new regulations will have on drivers 'back-to-backing' short tours, there shouldn't be a problem.

"Where we are going to have to re-think is with our incoming work. These tours tend to be longer, and forever on the move. A driver switch will not go down well with our clients but it does look like the only answer when contracts run for 12/14 days and more."

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Just the tickets in Scotland

The UK's biggest smartcard scheme outside London has seen 900,000 smartcards issued... but it's a huge project, and installing the machinery is some way off

The biggest smartcard scheme outside of London – linked to Scotland's concessionary fare scheme – is making good progress.

The Scottish Executive's Transport Scotland agency says that almost a million smartcards have now been issued to the country's pensioners, persuaded by a deadline on older OAP passes, and orders are now being placed for on-bus ticket machines.

According to Travel Dundee's managing director Jim Lee, progress will now be determined by the speed with which the 'clearing houses' for fares can get back-office technology up and running.

"We've already seen a 6% uplift in passenger numbers as a direct result of free travel for pensioners," said Mr Lee. "We opted for an average fare reimbursement because we have only three fares in the city, and we get 90% interim payment of the average fare value.

Travel Dundee (above) says loadings are up 6%. MD Jim Lee (left) says the machines are on order. Stagecoach Scotland MD Robert Andrew (far left) says smartcard will resolve old problems

"Our main concern has been that the total pot for fare reimbursement has been capped, but so far the bill is under the capped level."

Travel Dundee tallies concessionary OAP fares through its current ticket machinery, issuing the nil-value ticket endorsed OAP. The machines are then interrogated at the depot to provide the reimbursement scheme with evidence of carryings.

Mr Lee said Travel Dundee, part of National Express Group, has now specified and ordered its ticket machines – choosing Wayfarer equipment – through Travel Scotland and this will be passed on as an order to the Scottish Executive.

Robert Andrew, managing director of Stagecoach Scotland, said it was a case of 'so far, so good' with the scheme: "We've made a political commitment to the scheme and I think we've delivered so far," he told *CBW*. "The concessionary fare scheme replaced 16 local schemes with varying degrees of generosity. Some did not offer peak concessionary travel, and they had geographical boundaries.

"For those reasons we're seeing an uplift in peak travel and cross-boundary travel."

Mr Andrew said Stagecoach has ordered ERG ticket machines but expected it to be some time before delivery.

Travel Scotland confirmed the orders for machines are now coming in, though said it couldn't quantify orders so far.

Cutting the cost of cash handling

Automated cash depositing is now a standard feature in most bus depots. It not only relieves the driver of manual counting but cuts cash management costs.

Operators were initially cautious but soon recognised the benefits and in fact, many played a key role in helping to develop the systems. For their part, manufacturers such as SCAN COIN continued to extend the capability of their machines with additional features based on feed back from end-users, completely new models and introducing a greater degree of integration with ticketing and cash office systems.

The total number of SCAN COIN cash depositing systems in the UK bus industry is now well over 500 and worldwide the company has installed more than 10,000 systems.

SCAN COIN's CDP4 is designed for through-the-wall or stand-alone installation and customers can specify front or rear access for removing note and coin vaults and for servicing. It connects to TCP/IP networks to transfer cash information and for real time monitoring of machine operations. Its also gives service engineers on-site or remote access for diagnosing problems.

CDP4 cash deposit machine with front access option

A lower cost cash depositing system has recently been introduced by SCAN COIN. The CDS 830 offers exceptional performance within a smaller footprint. It incorporates the key requirements for coin and note depositing but excludes some of the more sophisticated features which may not be required by some operators. It uses SCAN COIN's well proven coin sensing technology to deliver the same levels of reliability as the larger machines.

SCAN COIN also supplies a wide range of back office machines that complement the cash depositing with the potential to create a fully automated system.

The SC 2200 Active, is one of the most popular medium to high-volume coin sorters used in the transport industry. It can process 8 coin denominations at speeds of up to 3000 coins per minute and validates all coins with SCAN COIN's unique and patented coin sensing system to provide exceptional accuracy. Foreign, unrecognised or invalid coins are automatically rejected to ensure that the coin count is accurate.

One of SCAN COIN's most recent innovations is a ticket vending machine (TVM) for issuing transport tickets for multiple destinations and ticket types. Payment is made using coins, notes or credit cards and ticket selection is made using a touch screen menu. Several tickets can be bought together using the 'shopping basket' facility.

■ For details. Tel: 0161 873 0505. www.scancoin.co.uk

Wayfarer claims a 'first'

The vision of a truly interoperable public transport network came a significant step closer at the end of last year when the Wayfarer TGX150 electronic ticket machine became the only on-bus machine to receive ITSO conditional certification within the timescales laid down by Transport Scotland.

Wayfarer Transit Systems has got off to a flying start in the Scottish National Concessionary Travel. In the short time since the scheme has been running, Wayfarer has already received orders for on-bus machines to the value of £1.4m.

Sales and marketing director, Paul Moirano said: "We are delighted with the response we have had from the operators in Scotland who clearly see the benefits of selecting Wayfarer's TGX ticket machine, and recognise the importance of choosing a supplier with experience in implementing bus smartcard schemes plus an excellent track record in support."

Wayfarer is helping to underpin the growing move towards the ITSO standard across the UK, particularly as Wayfarer says its certification is technically the most comprehensive of any electronic machine in the marketplace. The accreditation means that the thousands of Wayfarer TGXs already in operation across the UK can be modified to be ITSO compliant, with the company also delivering an upgraded ITSO certified TGX product range.

This achievement means that a number of operators involved in smart card projects under development can now move forward with much greater confidence, including all the parties involved in Transport Scotland's Concessionary Card Scheme.

TGX150 - ahead of the game

Ticketing equipment is at the heart of the ITSO vision. This certification is therefore a fundamental development in turning the ITSO concept into reality for local authorities and bus operators and in proving the advantages of ITSO to potentially millions of smart card users.

Pensioners claim a glitch in the system

Though more than 900,000 smartcard concessionary passes are issued, pensioners in Perth are saying information offered about the passes has been inadequate.

According to Perth and Kinross Council, a leaflet setting out entitlement in using the passes was to be issued with them, but a Scottish Executive agency responsible for sending them decided that it was not practical. A spokesman for the council said pressure is now being put on the Scottish Executive to change their mind.

The council says that, as pensioners apply for the passes directly through the Post Office, and they are sent from the English manufacturer, it does not see them. However, it has published the information leaflet on its website.

It said that the lack of information has led to 20,000 pensioners still unaware that they had a deadline of March 31 to exchange existing, local bus passes.

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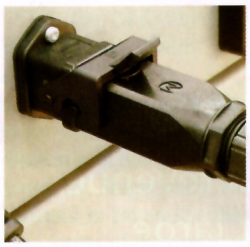

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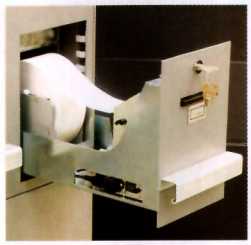

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Cheshire goes ITSO with project

Those at the leading edge of the ITSO programme - including the Cheshire and NowCard projects - are moving quickly to full ITSO smartcard using Wayfarer's TGX equipment.

One important milestone was proven in a pilot smart card scheme in the North West last year, when Wayfarer worked with NoWcard to deliver a smart card programme in Bolton and Blackburn that combined travel between the two boroughs with access to leisure facilities in each area. It became the first scheme in the country to demonstrate true on-bus ITSO capability using an electronic ticketing machine.

Cheshire was the first authority to receive certification for their smart card from ITSO. Currently the card includes stored value and period pass products - plans for future development include the introduction of additional zones across Cheshire, multi-journey, short-term visitor cards and concessions.

As part of the project, Cheshire County Council has already upgraded operators to Wayfarer's SmartTGX 150 with ITSO compatible readers, and has now placed an order with Wayfarer to deliver an ITSO certified ticketing configuration for use by all participating operators in and around Cheshire.

The successful rollout of Cheshire will be a key milestone for ITSO, the DfT, Cheshire County Council and Wayfarer, underlining the ability of partners to define and deliver complicated systems.

In addition, the same Wayfarer ticketing technology being used by the ITSO scheme in Cheshire - and in the pilot in the Bolton and Blackburn local authority areas - is now being adopted by Stagecoach North West as part of a massive investment in revenue collection systems.

This latest development will see Stagecoach introduce almost 500 Wayfarer TGX150 machines with contactless smart card readers onto their bus fleet in Cumbria and Lancashire. Initially, the technology will drive a paper-based ticketing system but the contract includes a technical roadmap as part of the NoWcard scheme leading to full ITSO smart card compliance.

ITSO is starting to come of age through projects such as NoWcard and Cheshire. These are very exciting times for ITSO, Wayfarer and the public transport sector in general, says Wayfarer.

■ Details from Wayfarer Transit Systems, 01202 339339 or see www.wayfarer.co.uk

Almex on-bus machines are part of a complete system of fare collection

Almex is a one-stop shop

Almex Information Systems claims to provide complete solutions for all operators' ticketing needs, with a wide range of standard products from fixed to portable, and driver, conductor or passenger-operated equipment to meet most transport requirements.

For customer-specific solutions, experience of rapid custom development is also available. The back office and system applications are open-platform and thus highly flexible across the range of products. A large degree of experience with a wide choice of service permutations to support delivered systems completes the group's offer.

The Windows operating system platform is being exploited to maximise the value of the Almex ticketing systems to operators. The use of a GPS receiver integral to the Optima means that automatic stage advance, and local schedule adherence, once the sole domain of real time system suppliers, becomes a reality for a fraction of the price.

The use of standard, upgradeable components in the Optima means that in a ticketing world which is increasing reliant on high processing capacity, larger memory and faster transmission speeds, the Optima is well positioned to serve the smart card environment.

■ **For details. Tel: 01793 647931. www.almex.co.uk**

Smartcard benefits for operators too, says Wayfarer

Smartcards offer a completely different fare collection rationale and should not be viewed simply as a replacement for an old paper-based system, says Wayfarer.

The scheme owners are increasingly acknowledging the potential of electronic ticketing, because this technology provides a wider range of ticket types together with comprehensive management data.

Add to this the benefit of implementing other IT solutions, such as local and wide area networks, and schemes can quickly add value to overall performance. Consequently there has been a continuing development programme to provide both hardware and software solutions not only within the vehicle but also in garage depots, travel shops and back offices. Where an operator requires a simple company scheme for its own products, an appropriate solution is relatively straightforward. However the progress of the ITSO standard is giving many scheme operators the confidence to commence the implementation of schemes in the knowledge of future migration to ITSO.

Generally the key elements for a successful scheme, no matter how complex, are clear objectives and planning from the outset. All parties need to work to clearly defined specifications, with good project management and phased implementation giving adequate time for training to those less familiar with these new technologies and practices.

Arriva 'deckers have got driver approval for CCTV successes

21st Century – CCTV fit for the future

On-board system can monitor driving behaviour and uploads images at depot wirelessly

21st Century is a relative newcomer to the public transport industry, but has rapidly established a strong reputation for high-quality CCTV with a whole range of add-ons to suit all transport operations.

The company was initially formed in 1986 and is now part of the TG21 plc group which specialises in providing vehicle security systems, audio equipment and on-board navigation.

It was in 1999 that 21st Century began to look at developing specialist systems and has concentrated on quality, reliability and expandability – allowing customers to develop their systems in line with changing demands. Its highly-successful wireless technology, although having few users, is the basis of over 2,000 installations. It has been adopted by Arriva and there are examples where the system has proved to be a major benefit.

The ProGuard system was specially designed for transport applications and its main recorder unit can be configured for between four and 16 cameras. It relies entirely on PCB printed circuits internally and is encased in a strong steel case mounted via anti-vibration isolation feet which were specially formulated for the aerospace industry.

> It allows the driver to strike a panic button in the event of an assault

The company says it doesn't want to emulate other CCTV providers, but is keen to offer far more features and exclusive functions as part of a basic, cost-effective, package.

It comes with two 40 gigabyte hard disks, which give around 30 days of image storage. The drives are robust 2.5-inch units – essential in anything portable – and a G-force chip comes as standard to aid Black Box analysis of driving behaviour.

A practical feature is the individual camera protection network which shows which of the cameras on board is malfunctioning - perhaps due to vandalism, water ingress or other problems. Each line has a reset function which may cure the problem: if not, the service personnel know exactly where to locate the faulty item.

ProGuard also offers four key inputs for GPS systems, Wi-fi, Black Box and CodeRed - plus a media capability where 'infotainment' can be directed towards passengers via 17-inch monitor screens.

Such flexibility and potential for expansion is described as 'Gateway' because it is capable of addressing all the foreseeable requirements for CCTV for some years to come.

Wi-fi, or wireless communication, is a key gateway feature which delivers high returns on investment through the saving in man-hours. It allows buses to automatically download data whenever they are within range of the receivers. Positioning a few antennae around the depot is usually enough to provide full coverage and the process is configured to occur whenever a vehicle is present at the depot.

The 21st Century system is also designed so it can deliver part of the download and then resume where it left off later. So if a bus came into the depot for a driver change and began downloading, but left before the process was completed, the next time it returned the download would resume, without duplicating data already processed.

The system is managed by 'Watchdog', which was developed to ensure system integrity. It also manages downloads where other information could be demanding priority - such as wireless downloading of ticket machine data.

CodeRed is a GPS-based function designed for emergency use. It allows the driver to strike a panic button in the event of an assault or serious incident and this automatically sends a text message containing the exact location and identification of the vehicle to the control room. At the same time, the signal from the driver's camera is also relayed and a live link established so the depot can see what is taking place and a microphone will allow the driver to explain what is happening; the live link can also be established by controllers to monitor a bus at any time.

> **Minimising inflated and bogus claims is a good lever to negotiate lower insurance premiums**

ProGuard (top) offers potential to expand systems. External cameras (above) can resolve accident claims

Black Box, like the aircraft system, provides total monitoring of the vehicle and is said to prove its worth in providing support for the video evidence of any reported incidents. It is often called on in claims to support cases and will show exactly what was occurring over a given time frame. Controllers can determine the exact speed of the vehicle, its cornering force, whether the brakes were being used, if the indicators were being used - and a host of other information.

Not only is Black Box an ideal tool for use in supporting evidence of claims or prosecutions, it can be used to evaluate drivers and highlight those who persistently speed or use heavy braking where not only are they putting passengers or other road users at risk, they are being uneconomical with fuel and putting additional stress on components which leads to increased maintenance and spare parts requirements.

Drivers who know a Black Box is installed tend to drive more carefully anyway. The Metropolitan Police use them and they saw a 30% decrease in accidents as a result.

Claims against bus companies, either genuine or bogus, have soared and Black Box data can support or refute a claim. Its major benefit has been as a huge deterrent to the 'no win - no fee' cases where accurate supporting data makes it unlikely they will get a judgement in their favour. Such companies have had a startling impact on the minds of the travelling public, as was revealed in a survey by the Association of British Insurers which found that 47% would be prepared to exaggerate a claim and as many as 37% were prepared to make a false claim.

Minimising inflated and bogus claims is a good lever to negotiate lower insurance premiums.

In the event operators minimise the general downloading, archiving and maintenance checks on the system, the whole process can be managed by 21st Century's Heartbeat programme.

Heartbeat features an automated status server which monitors all of a customer's systems around the clock. It will detect any camera failures, attempts to mask cameras, monitor the ProGuard unit's functions and check on the Wi-fi infrastructure.

All checks are coded with the time and date and the records are available to centralised offices or local depots. The system employs a spreadsheet-type approach to displaying its results with a simple RAG status coding (red, amber, green). This means as soon as the screen is viewed, any units with immediate faults are highlighted at ›

the head of the page in red. Those with minor or intermittent faults are shown in yellow and those responding as they should are coded green.

A peculiarity of the system means not all vehicles or systems highlighted in red would actually have a fault. It can mean the system has not been in touch with the Wi-fi network for 24 hours and sometimes the red status refers to a vehicle which could have spent a day or so in the workshops, or been lent to another depot and consequently remained out of range.

Where genuine faults are highlighted, operators have found it saves considerable sums of money having the automated checking system compared to employing teams of staff to do it routinely.

Operators have found it saves considerable sums of money having the automated checking system

Arriva experience

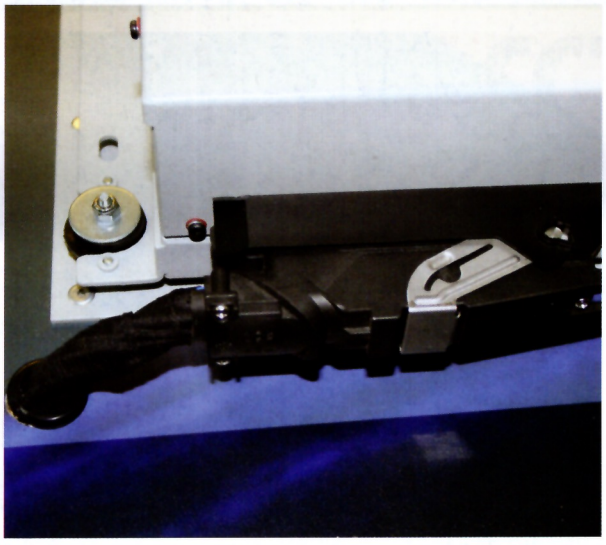
When Terry East took on the job of managing Arriva's operations in Gillingham, he was about to preside over the outing of a dilapidated fleet and tasked with re-invigorating a despondent workforce.

The arrival of a brand-new fleet of buses would obviously go some way towards instilling confidence, but to persuade them the sophisticated 21st Century CCTV system was in their interests was another real challenge.

Mr East said: "Things were so bad here staff wouldn't even admit to the general public they worked for Arriva. They wouldn't even leave the depot wearing anything that identified them as part of the company, and they showed real concerns that the system would be used just to monitor their behaviour and an example of 'big brother' watching their every move. They were to be given the option of having no CCTV but that would mean all our buses would have had to have been fitted with assault screens. Virtually all the drivers didn't want them introduced because they all prefer interaction with the passengers.

"We had some lengthy discussions with union representatives, about what CCTV would mean, and managed to allay most of their fears. We don't use the footage recorded to pore over looking for things to catch our drivers out: the material is there to be used if an incident is reported - but that's all. The system is employed to protect against vandalism and provide an accurate account of events in the event of any incidents or accidents which are reported.

Wi-fi antenna (above) at depot collects the data. The Black Box records driver behaviour



Above: secure connections to ProGuard unit

"Staff agreed to the introduction of the systems and very quickly came around to the benefits. There have been one or two incidents where we've been forced to use recorded data in disciplinary hearings, but in all cases we locate the data and have it reviewed by an independent assessor.

"Early success came when one of our brand new buses was 'egg and floured' by schoolchildren. The data showed them leaving their materials on the upper deck and going down the stairs - where they placed plastic bags, with holes made in the front to see through, over their heads. They then went back upstairs and made an awful mess.

"They had no idea they were still being filmed on the staircase and so we could identify all the culprits."

New buses, of course, brought a new era to the area with a vastly improved image and greater reliability. Ultimately this has seen a reversal in the company's fortunes and the despoilers among the population have begun to realise they can't get away with bad behaviour aboard the buses - or outside them.

Mr East said there was one specific area where services had all but been abandoned because of the stone-throwing attacks and hooligans standing on bus shelters waiting to 'surf' the roofs of passing buses.

The situation was resolved in a strange manner. Street hooligans were warned-off by other criminal elements in the area not wishing to have too much police attention drawn to their own activities - which could lead to them being identified as images were being scanned.

The result for Arriva has been the restoration of bus services to the area, increased patronage and a cessation of stoning or surfing incidents - and only a couple of staff are required to look after the whole process.

Arriva's success in Gillingham as a whole has grown around the company's ability to make the most of the confidence and investment passed down from Group level. Adopting a hi-tech CCTV system has been no mean contributor to achieving that success.

21st Century has a huge support network in place as it can call on the services of its associate companies for both installation and maintenance of equipment. It also runs a sizeable helpdesk from its headquarters in Mitcham, designed to ensure fast response to any enquiry.

■ www.cctv-uk.com.
Tel: 01254 697989

Have you taken delivery of a new vehicle and want to tell the world about it? Email all the details and pictures to *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk* or write to the address on page 3

READING TRANSPORT

Ten more Wrightbus Scania Solars have recently joined the Reading Transport fleet.

The 12m lowfloor buses are built on a Scania L94UB chassis and carry 43 seated passengers plus 33 standees, along with a wheelchair facility. They were specified with Civic V2 cantilevered seats, driver-controlled heating system, battery protection and a DVRX camera system comprising seven cameras and a TFT monitor.

Additional features include Hanover colour destination displays, Wayfarer ticket machines and distinctive route branding with the front and side of the vehicle painted to display the relevant route.

This latest order brings the total number of Wrightbus/Scania vehicles in Reading's fleet to 30. Operations director Sam Simpson, commented: "The delivery to Reading Transport of more Wrightbus Solar vehicles on the Scania L94UB chassis further cements the close working relationship between Wrightbus, Scania and ourselves and enables us to continue to deliver high-quality, comfortable, easily-accessible buses on Reading's ever-expanding network of Premier Routes.

"The Wrightbus Solar is of excellent pedigree, enjoyed by our customers, drivers and engineers alike and is fitted with Hanover colour destination displays."

Nine of the new vehicles were delivered directly to Reading and one was displayed at the recent Album (Association of Local Bus Company Managers) Conference held in Cardiff.

FACT FILE

Chassis/body Scania L94UB Wrightbus Solar
Engine DC9
Transmission ZF auto
Seats 43
Spec Hanover colour display
Supplied by Wrightbus 028 2564 1212

HALPENNY TRAVEL

The latest acquisition from Halpenny Travel will ensure that the visitors who tour with them all over Ireland are truly travelling in style.

The Spanish Sunsundegui-bodied Volvo B12B is the second such model in less than a year for the Dundalk-based operator. It features the Volvo 420 hp engine coupled to an I-Shift gearbox.

Inside, as well as 49 reclining seats, it boasts full climate control, TV/DVD and CD player, toilet and hot and cold drinks facilities.

Halpenny's striking new blue livery ensures that the coach's exterior matches the high-spec interior as it takes UK clients on behalf of Riviera Travel, and American and Japanese tourists for a selection of other tour companies, all over Ireland. Opting for another Volvo B12B was an easy choice according to managing director, John Halpenny. "Passengers are impressed with its looks and comfort, while we are delighted with the I-Shift gearbox which makes it a pleasure to drive and promotes good fuel economy," he explained.

"Add to that Volvo's first-class service and back-up and it's easy to see why we wanted the same again so quickly!"

FACT FILE

Chassis/body Volvo B12B/ Sunsundegui Sideral 2000
Engine Volvo 420bhp
Transmission I-Shift
Seats 49
Spec on-board entertainment system
Supplied by Volvo Bus 01926 401777

THOMAS BROTHERS

Rising expectations from passengers to be carried in more comfort led South Wales operator Thomas Brothers of Llangadog in Carmarthenshire to choose this Optare Soroco (left) when they went shopping for a new minicoach.

Gareth Thomas, who runs the family business started by his father and uncle back in 1923, says that van-derived minibuses, while practical for many purposes, often fail to provide the quality of travelling experience that passengers now expect.

"People generally enjoy a higher standard of comfort in most areas of their lives these days and that extends to their travel," he explains.

"That's why we've invested in this Soroco, which is a proper coachbuilt vehicle with all the features that you associate with that.

"The standard of fit and finish is very good and there's a general feel of luxury about it."

The compact size of Soroco makes it well suited to the twisting and often narrow country roads around Llangadog. It's less than two metres wide and just over seven metres long, yet feels very spacious inside.

It has a raised roof that allows passengers to move to and from their seats in comfort.

Thomas Brothers will use the Soroco on a variety of work including local mini-tours, private hires and airport runs.

"The fact that it's got good luggage space is very useful on airport work in particular," says Mr Thomas.

Based on the proven Mercedes Benz CDI Sprinter, Thomas Brothers' new Soroco has ample power at 97 kW (129 bhp) from its turbocharged and intercooled engine to cope easily with the hilly terrain of South Wales

Now celebrating its 83rd year in business, Thomas Brothers continues as a family-run firm.

From their Llangadog base, they run 19 vehicles ranging from 16-seater minibuses to full-size 57-seater coaches on a wide range of school contract and private hire work.

The Soroco is the first Optare product in their fleet and Gareth Thomas is very pleased with it.

FACT FILE

Chassis/body Optare NT
Engine Mercedes Benz CDI Sprinter 129bhp
Transmission five speed semi auto
Seats 16
Spec tinted windows
Supplied by Optare 01113 2645182

Barry Arnold gets OBE

Barry Arnold, managing director of Stagecoach London, has been awarded the Order of the British Empire in The Queen's birthday honours list (*CBW* News, June 21).

Barry (60) received the prestigious award in recognition of his contribution to the bus industry in London over the past 42 years.

Barry said: "I'm really pleased to have received such recognition. It came as a surprise. I have had more than 40 years' service in the bus industry, but I have been very fortunate to have worked with a lot of very talented people.

"I've had a great time working with Stagecoach since 1994 and over the years my career has taken me overseas to Hong Kong and Singapore. It's a job I've loved doing and it's given me a lot of satisfaction."

Barry joined London Transport as a clerk in 1964 after leaving school and worked his way up over four decades.

Honoured: Barry Arnold, OBE

When London's network was privatised in 1994, he assumed the role of commercial director at Stagecoach London and has headed up the company's London business since 1997.

Barry will bow out of the bus industry after 42 years when he retires in August.

He has lived in Hertfordshire since 1974 and is married with two children and one grandchild..

Barry's successor, Nigel Barrett, said: "Barry is one of the few people to have worked in the industry under nationalised and privatised regimes. I would like to give Barry and his wife all our very best wishes for a long and happy retirement."

BWW recognises key members

Buses Worldwide (BWW) has honoured two of its members in recognition of their long service to the society.

John Smith, upon retiring from the committee, has been given a lifetime membership, only the second one ever to have been handed out. John served on the committee for nearly 15 years, ten of them as chairman. He will remain involved in BWW matters and is still a crucial part of the Bedfordshire rural transport partnership and its quest to improve services in the area.

Geoff Morant, the other person to have been awarded a lifetime membership, has been given the title of 'President Emeritus'. Geoff has been involved in the society since it started in 1982 and still regularly contributes today. He was also BWW's founding chairman.

BWW is an international association for people interested in bus and coach operations and manufacturers all over the world.

ENGINEERING MANAGER

Stagecoach in Warwickshire operates a fleet of 180 buses across Warwickshire and is now seeking an experienced Engineering Manager, for its Leamington Spa Depot.

Reporting directly to the Engineering Director, the successful applicant will need to be able to demonstrate a proven history in both, technical and people management skills, preferably in the PCV/HGV industry.

As well as possessing an appropriate engineering qualification you will also have the ability to communicate effectively at all levels, whilst working to the highest standards of vehicle presentation, within strict Health and Safety guidelines. The ability to control costs within budget is also an essential requirement.

A competitive remuneration and relocation package, is available to the right candidate.

This is an exciting opportunity to join a progressive Group, with excellent career prospects. If you feel you are able to take on this challenging position, please send a full CV and covering letter with details of current salary to:

Mike Bishop
Engineering Director
Stagecoach in Warwickshire
Newtown Road, Nuneaton
Warwickshire, CV11 4HR
or email: mike.bishop@stagecoachbus.com
Closing Date: Monday 17th July 2006

Previous applicants need not apply

Stagecoach in Warwickshire

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

SELECT TENDER LIST FOR TRANSPORT OF OLDER PEOPLE TO MALMESBURY LAWN DAY CENTRE, HAVANT

The County Council is inviting tenders from suitably registered companies for the above services. Details of the tender are given below and the companies complying with paragraph 4 should obtain and return their tenders by the date in paragraph 6.

1. **Name, address, telephone number and fax number of the contracting local authority.**
   Hampshire County Council, Director of Environment, The Castle, Winchester SO23 8UD. Tel: 01962 846850. Fax: 01962 845855. Email: jill.drysdale@hants.gov.uk

2. **Details of the work.**
   Daily transport for older people from home to Malmesbury Lawn Day Centre, Woolston Road, Leigh Park, Havant for two years with the option to extend by one or two yearly increments to a maximum of five years.
   The estimated annual value of the contract is £75,000 to £85,000.

3. **Where applicable, the legal form to be assumed by the grouping of service providers winning the contract.**
   Joint and several liability.

4. **Criteria for obtaining contract documents.**
   Companies will need a PSV Operator's Licence or a Section 19 permit (if a community transport organisation) issued by the relevant Traffic Commissioner in accordance with the 1985 Transport Act.

5. **Criteria for the award of the contract.**
   The most economically advantageous tender in terms of price 80% and quality 20%. The County Council is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender. The basis for comparison of tenders will be to secure the required service by means of the most cost-effective and economic use of funds available to the County Council.

6. **Other Information.**
   Tenders can be obtained from the address in paragraph 1.
   Final date for receipt of tenders is 2pm on 7 August 2006.
   The tenders will be opened by authorised officers of The Chief Executive's Department and should be valid for 60 days.

Hampshire County Council

John George, MBE

Travel Coventry driver John George has been awarded a MBE in The Queen's birthday honours list for services to public transport and charity.

John (59) has been a driver in Coventry for 36 years and was the founder member of 'The Full Wumpty', a team of stripping bus drivers who have raised more than £50,000 for charity.

John said: "My wife and I were shocked when we heard. We both thought it was a wind-up because the lads in the Full Wumpty play terrible tricks on each other.

"I think the award reflects not only on me but on the all the rest of the boys in the group."

The Full Wumpty has raised money for a number of local charities including Comic Relief, Macmillan Nurses, the Air Ambulance Association and the Make a Wish Foundation.

John added: "I love being a bus driver because I like meeting people and my colleagues at work have become like my family."

Former council leader made a peer

Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, chairman of the Local Government Association and former Kent County Council leader, has been given the title of Lord Bruce-Lockhart of the Weald. Sir Sandy was made a peer in April and had his new title conferred upon him by the Lord Chancellor.

Sir Sandy was first elected to the county council in 1989. He is also chairman of the Kent Thameside Delivery Board; a trustee of the Centre for Social Justice; and a school governor. He has written widely about public services and social issues.

Bound for Blackpool

Careful bus drivers from Stagecoach East Kent and Hastings did some 'overtime' to decide which of them would be going to the Bus Driver of the Year final, which will be staged at Blackpool in September.

Out of the 21 in the heat – all with no blameworthy accidents since last year – Martin Staveley won by a whisker and will represent the company against more than 120 other finalists on September 9 and 10.

Dover driver Martin is a winner, getting £100 from Stagecoach. Runner-up Jaqueline Turner, from the Hastings depot, received £50, while third-placed Ben Bridges, also from Dover, received £25, as did Dover-based Justin Roberts, who finished fourth.

I'LL SELL IT MYSELF

More operators are trying to sell their vehicles privately these days. Reasons for this range from wanting to reduce the size of the fleet through to feeling that a better deal can be achieved by not offering a part exchange against the current purchase.

Whatever the reason, there are some points that need attention to give the best possible chance of achieving a sale. First, decide on the type of advert. It's important that it has impact to catch the eye. Use a box advert of a reasonable size for the number of vehicles that will go in it. Don't be afraid of using a quarter or even half page if necessary. One advert with strong impact every two or three weeks is better value than a small, nondescript advert weekly. Allow space for a good-sized photo of each vehicle (digital cameras make this a doddle), along with a basic description. Avoid using overworked adjectives such as "immaculate" or "mint".

Potential purchasers will want to know the number of owners from new, the mileage it's covered and the type of work it has been used for. Make sure there's an asking price and the area of the country where the vehicle is located if an address is not given. Ensure there are further photos available to be sent by e-mail.

When deciding on the asking price, do some research into what others are asking for similar vehicles. It isn't necessary to make it the cheapest in order to have the best chance of selling, but it needs to be competitive after honestly bearing in mind its condition.

When taking responses to the advert over the phone, make sure that honesty is used to answer questions. There's nothing more annoying to a potential customer than being told one thing and finding out something completely different having travelled several hours to take a look. That just wastes everybody's time and actually decreases the chance of achieving a sale.

SCANIA

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AFTERSALES KEY ACCOUNT MANAGER

Scania has long been acknowledged as one of the UK's leading suppliers of heavy trucks, buses and coaches. Joining our Customer Support Department you'll enjoy the autonomy of managing your own workload as you provide a single point of contact for national fleet bus and coach customers for aftersales support.

You will manage a portfolio of high profile, blue-chip customers with demands and expectations based on Scania's reputation for quality and reliability. As you inspire confidence with your professionalism and decision making capabilities, you'll encourage and develop productive business relationships whilst at all times ensuring swift resolution of issues raised.

An industry professional, you might come from a dealership, operator or manufacturing network background. What is key though is your ability to deal with customers, suppliers and colleagues with consummate skill, diplomacy and sensitivity. A polished negotiator and communicator, you'll have the self-motivation and initiative to not only work on your own but relish the opportunity to take control of your own destiny. You will be PC literate and able to produce good quality reports, correspondence and analysis. Technical experience is also essential. Travelling extensively within the UK, you will need a full current driving licence and a central or southern England base would be advantageous.

In return you can expect a comprehensive benefits package and scope for professional and personal development.

To apply, please write to Paul Frost, Scania (GB) Limited, Delaware Drive, Tongwell, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK15 8HB or email sgb.recruitment@scania.com Closing date: 6th July 2006.

www.scania.co.uk

MacBACKPACKERS.com

Transport Manager Position

Managing a fleet of 12 buses.
Full time/permanent position.
20k + depending on experience/qualifications.
PSV essential. Cpc holder preferred.
Working for a small, independent Edinburgh based bus tour company.

Apply by contacting Peter MacMillan on 0131 2201869

Ensignbus

DOUBLE DECKER SPECIALIST

1992 J REG OPTARE DELTA'S , DAF SB220'S ,
51 seaters, very good condition , good selection. ONE LEFT.

1991 H REG DENNIS DOMINATOR
Gardner 6LXB/Voith 4 speed automatic (55mph), East Lancs low height body, 13ft 8in, 76 seats.

1989 F REG LEYLAND OLYMPIANS
Cummins L10/ZF, Northern Counties semi low

1990 G REG LEYLAND OLYMPIANS,
Gardner 6LXB/ZF automatic, Alexander 76 seat bodies.

1983/4 A/B REG LEYLAND OLYMPIANS,
Gardner 6LXB, ECW 77 seat lowheight bodies, recent retrims.

1988 E REG LEYLAND OLYMPIANS,
Hydracyclic, Optare bodies, single door, 68 seats, from a very good home.

1994 L REG DENNIS LANCES
Cummins/ZF, East Lancs bodies, 48 seaters, superb condition.

1991-92 LEYLAND OLYMPIANS
Cummins L10/ZF, Alexander R type bodies, either 74 seat dual door or 78 single door, large choice

1997 P REG MCW METRORIDER
25 seaters, large selection

1995 M REG VOLVO B6'S,
Volvo engines, ZF gearboxes, Alexander 40-seat bodies, good selection

1989 F REG LEYLAND
ALL SOLD
bodies, height , big 87 seaters.

1989 PP DENNIS CONDORS
Gardner/Voith, Duple Metsec bodies, 2 door, 106 seaters

1989 G REG OPTARE DELTA'S
DAF SB220's, ZF automatics, 49 seaters.

1997 P REG VOLVO OLYMPIANS,
Alexander bodies, 2 doors, 68 seats, or can be single doored and upseated to 78

1995 M REG VOLVO OLYMPIAN,
Volvo/Voith, Alexander body, 82 seats , new test.

1990 DENNIS CONDORS,
Arriving now from Hong Kong. Cummins L10 engines, Voith 3 speed auto gearboxes, tinted windows, full air-con throughout, 94 seats with 2 doors or 95 with single door conversion. Refurbished to Firstgroup spec 4 years ago. Limited number available.

1990 G REG LEYLAND OLYMPIANS
Cummins L10/ZF, Northern Counties body, 1 door, 79 seats

1986 C REG LEYLAND OLYMPIANS
ECW Lowheight bodies, 77 seats, Cummins L10 engines, Voith 4 speed gearboxes (60mph)

1986/7 LEYLAND OLYMPIANS
Gardner/hydracyclic, ECW semi-low height bodies, 68 seats, long tests, some single door, 72 seaters also available

1991/2 H/J REG DENNIS DOMINATORS
Garner 6LXCT/Voith 4 speed (65mph) East Lancs 80 seat bodies, superb condition.

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or call on : 0141 221 3165 / evenings 0141 639 6107 fax : 0141 221 3172
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M8 to Junction 27 Paisley/ Renfrew at roundabout go back on yourselves onto Renfrew Road, Next roundabout follow signs for Westway with Fire Station on your right, turn left into Porterfield Road then turn left into Westway ind Estate

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Dennis Alexander Service
1992 48 Seats, ZF Auto, Cummins, Choice, Very Economical, all Tested

Merc 811D Service Buses
Choice of 8 - 29 to 33 Seats, some Lifts, some Auto, some wheelchair

MERC 814 BUFFALO 33

MERC 814 L
96 33 BOTH P.DOOR & LARGE BOOT
MERC 814
05 24 LUXURY 54K ONLY
Mercedes Sprinter
2005 16 Seater with Boot

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FROM 6 SEATS
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Convoy Service/Dual Purpose

Good for Coaching or Service
Power Door, 16 Luxury Seats, Extra Long Wheelbase, Low Step, Destination

3 Weeks Delivery

Volvo Plaxton Premier

1995 B10M 49/53 Seats, Toilet, DVD

1999 Scania Vanhool

Exec, Comfort Shift, Video, Air Con

2001 Volvo B10M

51/53 Seat, Volvo Engine, Air Con

Kassbohrer Setra

1991 53 Seat, Hi Line, Merc V8 Engine
Also 1985 49/53 Seat & 1987 35 Seat

Specials Specials Specials

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Javelin Duple Body 3200 1990 57 Seat, Cummins, Belts can convert to 70 Seats
Dennis Javelin 1992 46 Seats, Belts, Cummins
Javelin 1992 70 Seat, Cummins ZF, 3 Point Belts, Air Suspension £ 36000.00
Dennis Javelin 1993 9.5m 42 Seat, Air Con, Cummins
Tiger Plaxton Paramount 3500 1988 51 Seat, ZF Auto, Toilet or 57 or 70 £ 10000.00
Tiger Duple 320 1987 57 Seat £ 8000.00
Leyland Tiger Plaxton 3200 1992 53 St, Manual ZF, Cummins, Tested £ 14000
Setra 1985 49/53 Seat, Toilet, 6 Spd £ 5000
Setra 1991 53 Coach Seats, Air Con, Merc V8 Engine, PA System
Volvo Plaxton B10M 1995 49/53 Seat, Belts, Fridge, Boiler, TV, Double Glazed, PA, Courier Seat also Jonckeere same Spec

Mercedes Vito

Most Spec and Colours available from Stock also Auto Extra Long 9 Seats now Also new available in VW Caravelle and Ford Tourneo
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Specials Specials Specials

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Used 2001 Mercedes 411 Twin Wheel, Very Low Mileage also Transit 15 & 17 Seat
New Vario 24 Seat Ready to Convert also available Vario Welfare also Vito extra Long

Iveco Service Bus
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Leyland Daf
1998 to New Factory & Front Entry, Low and High Roof, 16 Seats, Long & Extra Long, Wheelchair Available

Toyota Caetano
1992 18 Highback Coach Seats, Courier Seat, Tested, Full Luxury

Toyota Caetano
1994 21 Highback Seats, Courier Seat

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New DDA 32 Seats, Belts, Auto, Lift, up to 10 W/c's, Flat Floor - stock
New Beaver Plus 2 Plus 33 Highback Coach Seat, Luggage Racks & Boot **-Used available**
New Beaver Service 29 Seats + Pen DDA Manual

Merc 413 Wheelchair

New 413D Luxury 16 Seat, Boot, DVD, Luxury
New Luxury 16 Seat, Boot, non Extended
New 413D Wheelchair Accessible 16 Seat
2001 411D Wheelchair Accessible 16/5 w/c low mileage

Wheelchair

Mercedes 814D New 23 Seats 5 W/C's, Side Lift, Boot
Mercedes 614D 2000 16 or 24 Coach Seats, 3 to 5 W/C
Mercedes 413D 16 Seats up to 5 W/c's *NEW & USED*
Mercedes Twin Wheel 411 New conversion 16/5 Wheelchairs Underfloor Taillift, low mileage
Mercedes Vito 8+Driver up to 3 W/c's also VW or Ford
Leyland 16 Seats, Under floor Lift, Luxury Extra Long

16 to 24 Seaters

Mercedes 16 Seater
Choice New Luxury
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311D 16 Seats, Belts, Luggage Racks, Rear Step *Bargain Price £ 26995.00*

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Other Used Available

Mercedes 24 Seater
Choice New Luxury
Power Door, Large Boot
Also choice of welfare 24/6 wheelchairs or 23 Luxury side Lift / 6 wheelchairs & Boot also 1 Year Old Luxury & choice of 9 Used

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Available New 17 Seats 137 Engine, Electric Windows & Mirrors 3 Years Warranty
2003 & 2004 17 Seats
1994 / 1997 Great Choice ***Also*** new and used and also used
Tourneo GLS £ 13000.00 with Ramp
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Standard & Extra Long & W/C Access
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Double Deck

Leyland Titan
1982 76 Service Seats, Gardner Engine, Semi Auto box

Metroliner
1985-86 84 Seats (63 up 20 down) Cummins ZF, Tri-axle Available Now

MCW
1980-83 71-76 Service Seats, Auto Also Open Tops

Scania Double Deck
1988 Alexander, 78 Service Seats, some Voith Auto, Tested

Metrobus Open Tops
71 Seats on Air Suspension, Auto Choice Available Hard Tops

Leyland Open Top
1988 Olympian 73 Seats, Auto *also* Choice of 1988 N.Counties 72-77 Low Bridge Gardeners or Cummins ZF

Leyland Lion TL11
1985-86 84 - 86 Seats, Turbo, Single & Double Door, ZF Auto, 52 MPH

Super Low Floors

Optare Excel
11.5m, 1998, Merc Engine, 45/21 Semi High Seats, Tested, Interior Pink Seats and Poles
LOOKS GREAT

Optare Solo Mini
2000 & 2001 Mercedes Engine, 26/29 or 29/22 Seats, Auto Allison, Tested,
ABOVE AVERAGE

Neoplan
1999, 45+25 Upgraded Seats, Cummins ZF, 11.7m, Choice Retrimmed, Not High Mileage
WHAT A MACHINE - 2

Dennis Darts
1999 10.7m Marshall 43+19 Above average condition
2000 Plaxton 8.8m 29 Upgraded Seats, Works Reconditioned Engine

Choice of 3 Used

Mercedes 33 Cheetah

33 Highback Coach Seats & Boot
29 & Jumbo Boot
25 Jumbo Jumbo Boot
All the above with Luxury Coach Seats, Double Glazed, Retarder, Large Boot, Choice of Auto or ZF, Adjustable Footrests, 20 MPG, Choice of Interior Colour

Used Stock
Choice of 2 Pre-registered Cheetah's - Manual or Auto all to above spec
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2004 814D 29 Seat, Extra Large Boot, Luxury
2000 Cheetah 33 Seats, all extras
1999 814D 29 Seat, Boot, full Luxury, Tested
1993 814D 33 Seat
1996 814L 33 Seat, Mercedes Power Door
1990 814D 33 Seat, Boot, Tested

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Website: www.hwpickrell.co.uk

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5 SPEED MANUAL, LONG WHEEL BASE, PAS, HIGH ROOF, HIGH SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH LOW STEP, 8 HIGH BACK SEATS, UNWIN TRACKING FOR W/ CHAIRS, RICON TAIL LIFT, ONE OWNER, LOW MILES, 36,000 MILES

T REG FORD TRANSIT 190

T REG FORD TRANSIT 190,DIESEL, 5 SPEED MANUAL, LONG WHEEL BASE, PAS, HIGH ROOF, SIDE LOADING DOOR ,11 HIGH BACK SEATS ,UNWIN TRACKING FOR W/CHAIRS RICON TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER, LOW MILES 48,000 MILES

2000 X REG RENAULT MASTER

2000 X REG RENAULT MASTER , SM33, 2.2 DCI 5 SPEED, PAS, SWB, ATLAS CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 8 SEATS OR 4 PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER LOW MILES

2001 Y REG FORD TRANSIT

2001 Y REG FORD TRANSIT NEW SHAPE 330,DIESEL, 5 SPEED MANUAL, MWB, PAS, MEDIUM ROOF, SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 8 HIGH BACK SEATS, UNWIN TRACKING FOR W/CHAIRS, RICON TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER, LOW MILES 33,000 MILES

2001 Y REG TOYOTA HIACE

2001 Y REG TOYOTA HIACE , 2.4 DEISEL ,5 SPEED ,PAS, AIR CON, BUS CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 3 SEATS PLUS DRIVER PLUS W/CAIR RICON TAIL LIFT, 33,500 MILES. V GOOD CONDITION

51 REG VAUXHALL MOVANO 2.2

51 REG, VAUXHALL MOVANO 2.2 TURBO DIESEL, PAS, LWB, EXCEL CONVERSION, FULL AIR CON, SIDE LOADING DOOR, 10 REMOVABLE HIGH BACK SEATS ,UNWIN TRACKING, EBERSPACHER HEATER, RICON CLEARWAY TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER, LOW MILEAGE

2000 W REG FORD TRANSIT

2000 W REG FORD TRANSIT 120, DIESEL, 5 SPEED MANUAL, SHORT WHEEL BASE, PAS, HIGH ROOF SIDE LOADING DOOR ,8 HIGH BACK SEATS, UNWIN TRACKING FOR W/CHAIRS RICON TAIL LIFT, ONE OWNER, LOW MILES 33,000 MILES

T REG 1999 FORD TRANSIT 2.5

T REG 1999 FORD TRANSIT 2.5 TD, MANUAL, CHASSIS DEVELOPMENT COACHBUILT BODY, P A S, 15 REMOVABLE SEMI HIGH BACK SEATS, UNWIN TRACKING, RICON UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT, SLIDING DOOR FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, 48,000 MILES

X REG PEUGEOT BOXER

X REG PEUGEOT BOXER, 2.5 DEISEL, 5 SPEED, PAS, LONG WHEEL BASE, HIGH ROOF, SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 12 SEMI HIGH BACK SEATS, UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, V GOOD CONDITION , ONE OWNER

94/95 M REG MERCEDES 609/709

94/95 M REG MERCEDES 609 & 709, CUNLIFFE CONVERSION, LONG WHEEL BASE HIGH ROOF, 10 TO 24 SEMI HIGH BACK SEAT'S PLUS WHEEL CHAIRS, UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, FRONT ENTRY POWER DOOR WITH FOLD DOWN STEP, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY

2001 Y REG RENAULT MASTER

MM33, 2.2 DCI, 5 SPEED, PAS, MWB, O & H CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 7 SEATS PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER.

X REG 2001 FORD TRANSIT

X REG 2001 FORD TRANSIT 2.5 TD, MANUAL,CHASSIS DEVELOPMENT COACHBUILT BODY, P A S, 12 REMOVABLE HIGH BACK SEAT'S,UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, POWER DOOR FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, 63,000 MILES

X REG 2000/1 IVECO TURBO DAILY

X REG 2000/1 IVECO TURBO DAILY IRIS BUS, 45.10 2.8 TD, AUTO & MANUAL, P A S, LWB, HIGH ROOF, 12 -16 REMOVABLE HIGH BACK SEAT'S, UNWIN TRACKING, PLS UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT, POWER DOOR FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, 63,000 KMS CHOICE OF 6

2001 51 REG RENAULT MASTER

2001 51 REG RENAULT MASTER , LM33, 2.5 DCI ,5 SPEED ,PAS, LWB, WARNERBUS CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 8 SEATS PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON STRETCHER TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, LOW MILES

2001 51 REG VOLKSWAGON LT46

2001 51 REG VOLKSWAGEN LT46 , 2.5 TDI ,5 SPEED ,PAS, LWB, STANFORD CONVERSION FRONT ENTRY DOOR WITH STEP, 15 REMOVABLE SEMI HIGH BACK SEATS WITH HEAD RESTS, RATCLIFF UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, V/GOOD CONDITION ONE OWNER

03 REG 2003 RENAULT MASTER

03 REG 2003 RENAULT MASTER ,LM35, 2.5 ,5 SPEED ,PAS, LWB, MELLOR CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 15 SEATS OR 10 PLUS 2 WHEEL CHAIRS, UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, MINT CONDITION 5,000 MILES ONLY

02 REG VOLKSWAGEN LT35

2.5 TURBO DIESEL 109 BHP, PAS, LUXURY SPEC FRANK GUY CONVERSION, TWIN SLD'S, TINTED WINDOWS, 10 HIGH BACK SEATS,OVER HEAD LOCKERS, WITH AIR & LAMPS REAR STORAGE AREA, EBERSPACHER CLIMATE CONTROL, EX DEMO 16,000 MILES

2001 Y REG MERCEDES SPRINTER

2001 Y REG MERCEDES SPRINTER ,2.2 CDI DIESEL, 5 SPEED MANUAL, MWB, HIGH ROOF SIDE LOADING DOOR ,11 HIGH BACK SEATS ,UNWIN TRACKING FOR W/CHAIRS RATCLIFF UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER, LOW MILES 17,000 MILES

NEW 06 REG, IVECO 40.C13

2.9 TURBO DIESEL IRIS CONVERSION 14 HIGH BACK COGENT SEATS. DOUBLE FRONT PASSENGER SEAT, SIDE-LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, HIGH ROOF, M2 FLOOR, LOTS OF SPACE, DELIVERY MILEAGE ONLY, IN STOCK

54 REG VOLKSWAGON LT35

2004 54 REG VOLKSWAGEN LT35 , 2.5 DCI ,5 SPEED ,PAS, MWB, ADVANCED CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 7 SEATS PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, 16,450 MILES only

52 REG FORD TRANSIT TOURNEO 2.0

52 REG ,FORD TRANSIT TOURNEO 2.0 TDI, 125PSI, 9 LUXURY HIGH BACK SEATS,FULL AIR CON,TWIN SIDE LOADING DOOR, ELECTRIC STEP, LOW ROOF, TINTED BONDED WINDOWS ,ELEC WINDOWS METALIC SILVER, ALLOY WHEELS, LOW MILES 35,000, ONE OWNER, NICE SPEC,

2001 Y REG FORD TRANSIT

2001 Y REG FORD TRANSIT NEW SHAPE 350, DIESEL, 5 SPEED MANUAL, LWB, PAS, HIGH ROOF SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 8 HIGH BACK SEATS, UNWIN TRACKING FOR W/CHAIRS RATCLIFF UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT, ONE OWNER, VERY VERY LOW MILES ONLY 5,800 MILES

W REG IVECO TURBO DAILY CREWCAB

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51 REG IVECO 40

51 REG , IVECO 40.C11 2.9 TURBO DIESEL IRIS CONVERSION, 16 LUXURY HIGH BACK SEATS. SLAM DOOR FRONT ENTRANCE WITH LOW STEP, HIGH ROOF, BONDED WINDOWS , LOW MILES 75,000 KMS ONE OWNER EX NHS TRUST. NEW COIF.

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V REG,MERCEDES SPRINTER 412D, 2.8 TURBO DIESEL,UVG PREMIER BODY, PAS, LWB, SIDE DOOR, TWIN YORK 4 STRETCHERS, WITH SEAT BACKS, BULK HEAD DOOR, EBERSPACHER HEATER, AIR SUSPENSION, STROBE BLUES & SIREN,ONE OWNER, GOOD CONDITION

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1997 Scania Irizar	Exec	49
1997 Scania Irizar	Exec	49
1994 Scania van hool	STD	57
1994 Scania van hool	STD	57
1995 Volvo V.H B10M	Exec	51
1995 Plaxt Volvo B10M	Exec	49
1992 Volvo van hool	Exec	49
1992 Volvo van hool	Exec	49
1995 Volvo van hool	STD	53
1993 Volvo van hool	Exec	49
2000 Mercedes Vario	STD	24
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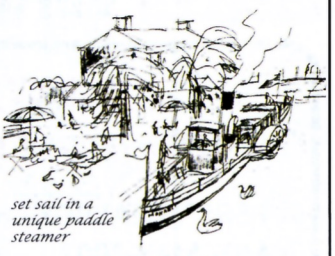

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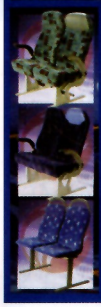

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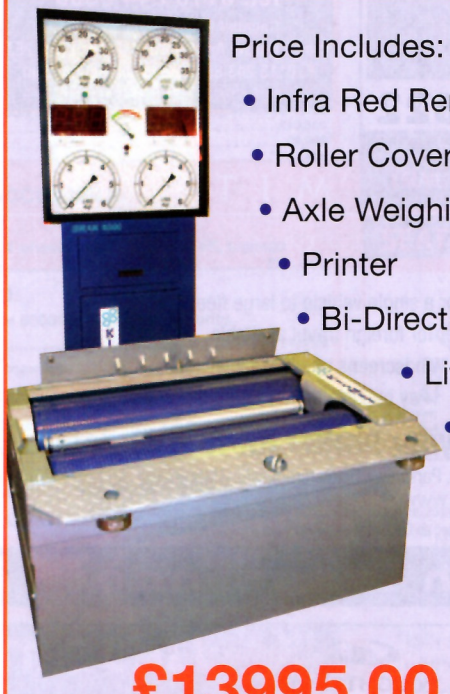

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MARK TERRILL – TICKET MACHINERY

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Email: mark.terrill@ukonline.co.uk

10421/TIC

Seen something funny? Send it to *mark.williams@rouncymedia.co.uk*, fax 0845 2802927 or write to: Last Stop, CBW, 3 The Office Village, Cygnet Park, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD

Model debut for cleaning lady

Spotted at Arriva's Gillingham depot at the beginning of June - a new double decker from a previously unknown coachbuilder.

The model bus, a replica of current fleet double deckers, had been built by one of the company's female cleaning staff. The wooden vehicle had taken her almost a year to complete and when it appeared in the yard it was a big surprise to virtually all members of the company.

It was very quickly found a prominent position for display - opposite the main workshop doors, where it became lavished in attention and praise from all those seeing it.

Although true scaling of the interior fittings left a little to be desired, the model deserves full marks for effort - look out East Lancs/ADL... the cleaners are coming!

Trouping the (pink) colour

Silver Gems dance troupe based at Failsworth, near Oldham, dispensed with weekly saver fares and went the whole hog – buying this Olympian on the occasion of its retirement from First in Manchester's fleet.

Engineering manager Steve Myers handed over the bus to Mags Hanley, the troupe principal, complete with its vivid livery that was painted by the boys at First.

"We now have our own bus, which will be driven around by one of our own supporters. We'll be able to get around far easier and we'll really make an impact when we arrive at the event," says Mags.

'Impact' doesn't begin to cover it, given the colour. Hope they've found someone good to do the maintenance...

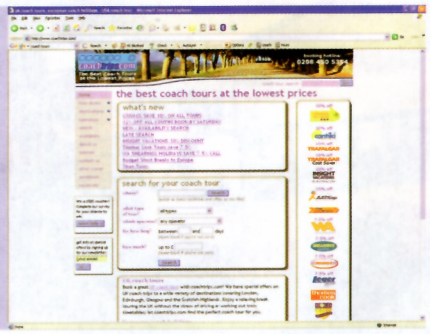
Two minute interview

Full name Anthony (Tony) Laver
Age 66 not out!
Occupation MD, Laver Holidays
Will there be more passengers on coaches and buses in the future? In the short term I think so, but as the internet advances, and assuming the budget airlines have got their sums right, I'm not too sure about the long term.
If 'yes', who will they be, and if 'no,' why not? We will be relying on the seniors as always, although short themed breaks do seem to attract a slightly younger element. Not enough to sustain the industry at its present size, but it's a start.
Which recent legislation has been most irritating or useless? The IOW parking fiasco and London's apparent aversion to our industry.
Give the industry's business managers 20 words of helpful advice... Be inventive! Don't rely on Eastbourne or Torquay for a future. Passengers are getting more demanding, so, thinking caps on!
When you got your first job in the industry, was it love at first sight? Absolutely! After years of driving artics, to suddenly find a load that got on and off by itself was too much to resist!
Which vehicle – coach, bus, motorcycle or car – do you love the most, and why? The Bova! At Boyden International I had my first in 1984 and at least one every year after that.
If you asked your best friend or partner, what would they say is your worst attribute? I'm boring - I live and breathe the business!
At your ideal dinner party, what would be the main course? Any Indian dish would go down well.
And in your glass? Sorry, just a lager! Wine puts me to sleep.

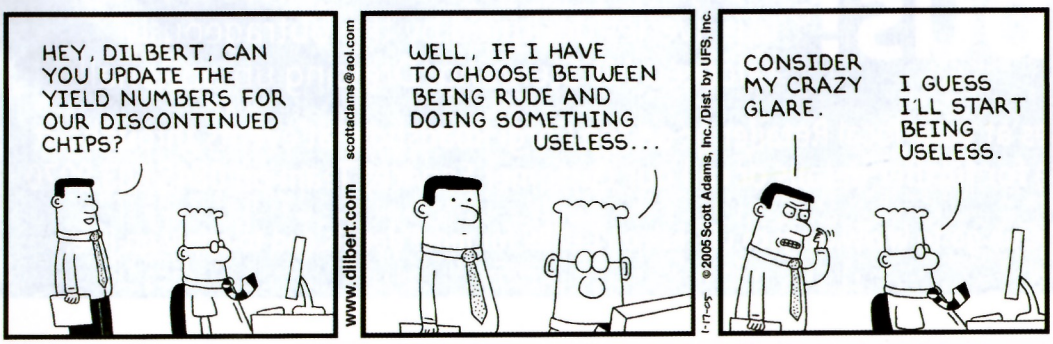
Googled...

http://www.coachtrips.com

Tap in the words 'coach tours' in Google and the first website on the list is coachtrips.com. An interesting site, it's a portal through which the public can find tours, often discounted, from the site's member tour operators. These include Trafalgar, Cosmos, Kontiki, WA-Shearings, Leger Gold Crest and others. Searchable under a number of criteria, coachtrips information includes details of air tours as well as a range of long-range coach tours, most of which seem firmly targeted at inbound Americans.



Dilbert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WELL, IF I HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN BEING RUDE AND DOING SOMETHING USELESS...
CONSIDER MY CRAZY GLARE.
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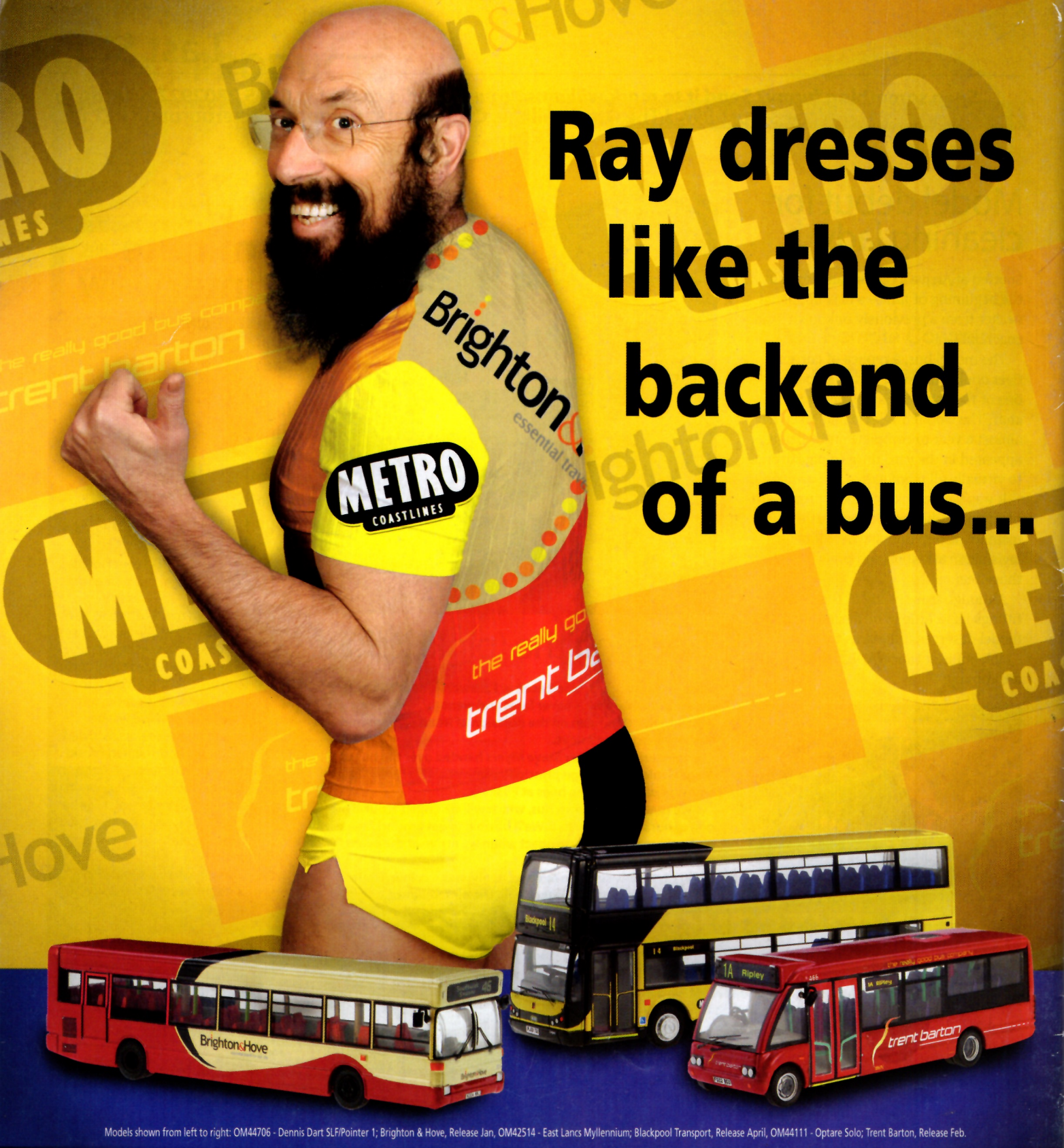

Models shown from left to right: OM44706 - Dennis Dart SLF/Pointer 1; Brighton & Hove, Release Jan, OM42514 - East Lancs Myllennium; Blackpool Transport, Release April, OM44111 - Optare Solo; Trent Barton, Release Feb.

...our bus!

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